THE MUSIC OF WILD FLOWERS

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE WILD FLOWERS OF SELBORNE
LIGHTER STUDIES OF A COUNTRY RECTOR
WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL
Etc.

THE MUSIC OF WILD FLOWERS

BY

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CANON OF WINCHESTER

"Wild flowers are my music."—Dr ARNOLD

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MCMXX

PREFACE

IT has seemed good, in deference to the wishes of many friends, to gather together in book form a number of my botanical papers, contributed to various journals and magazines, which illustrate the interest and delight to be found in the pursuit of botany.

Many of the articles in this collection appeared originally in the pages of *The Outlook* and of *The Saturday Review*, and my grateful thanks are offered to the editors for their kind permission to reproduce them. Similar acknowledgments are due to the editors of *The Quarterly Review* (in which the first article appeared, and which gives its title to the volume), to *The Cornhill*, *The Spectator* and *The Treasury*.

I have ventured to include in this collection of botanical papers one on the death-place of Izaak Walton. It appeared in *The Cornhill* of last December, and aroused considerable interest. It will not, I hope, be thought inappropriate, when we call to mind the old fisherman's love of wild flowers.

JOHN VAUGHAN.

THE CLOSE, WINCHESTER,
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THE MUSIC OF WILD FLOWERS

CHAPTER I

THE MUSIC OF WILD FLOWERS

DR ARNOLD of Rugby used to say: "Wild flowers are my music." He found in wild flowers, not, indeed, in the scientific study of botany, but in the simple love of our wayside flora, that refreshment and recreation which many persons find in music. "I cannot perceive," he wrote to a friend with reference to music, "what to others is a keen source of pleasure; but, on the other hand, there are many men who cannot enter into the deep delight with which I look at wood-anemones or wood-sorrel." One great charm associated with his beloved home of Fox How, between Rydal and Ambleside, was the abundance of wild flowers. He loved them, he used to say, "as a child loves them."

To many other distinguished men, besides the great Headmaster of Rugby, have wild flowers been the music of their lives. It is proposed in this chapter to consider a few signal illustrations of this fascinating recreation, which has appealed alike to poets and philosophers and men of letters, as well as to individuals of a more scientific attitude of mind.

Among philosophers who found in wild flowers the solace and refreshment of their lives, two notable names

may be recalled, those of Jean Jacques Rousseau and of John Stuart Mill. Readers of Rousseau's *Confessions* will remember the many allusions to the pursuit of botany which beguiled, especially in his later years, so many hours of the unhappy philosopher's life. He often regretted that, as a young man, he had not availed himself of the companionship of one Claude Anet, who, like himself, was an inmate of the household of Madame de Warens, and who, in his herbalising expeditions in the neighbourhood of Chambery, would return home laden with rare and interesting plants. But at that time Rousseau considered botany as only " a fit study for an apothecary." Claude Anet unfortunately died of a pleurisy, caught while botanising in the Alps, and the chance of becoming " an excellent botanist " was lost to the philosopher. But in after years he became, as he tells us, " passionately devoted " to the study of plants, which filled up his leisure hours, and in pursuit of which he would wander for miles along the countryside, " without a weary moment." During his sojourn in the Isle St Pierre, a lovely spot in the middle of the Lake of Bienne, he seems to have devoted most of his time to his favourite hobby. " The different soils into which the island, although little, was divided, offered," he writes in his *Confessions*, " a sufficient variety of plants for the study and amusement of my whole life. I was determined not to leave a blade of grass without examination, and I began to take measures for making, with an immense collection of observations, a *Flora Petrinsularis*." The persecution, however, to which Rousseau was subjected followed him to his beloved retreat, and before long he received notice from the authorities to quit the island without

delay. To his intense grief and indignation he was forced to obey, and the projected *Flora* was never compiled.

It will doubtless come as a surprise to many persons to learn that the author of *Principles of Political Economy* was an ardent field botanist. When, as a lad of fifteen, he paid a visit to Sir Samuel Bentham at his house in the south of France, he made friends with his host's only son, George, afterwards the author of the well-known *Handbook of the British Flora*, and it was under his influence that John Stuart Mill became a "searcher after simples." For many years, after he had entered the India Office, Mill was accustomed to spend his Sundays in long botanical rambles in the neighbourhood of London, while his annual holiday was usually passed in the same pursuit. Surrey and Hampshire were the chief spheres of his researches, and in these counties he made many interesting discoveries, which he was wont to chronicle in the pages of *The Phytologist*. It is interesting to search the numbers of this botanical miscellany for the contributions of J. S. Mill. He seems to have been the first discoverer in Surrey of the beautiful American balsam, *Impatiens fulva*, which he found growing sparingly on the banks of the Wey, near Guildford. At Guildford, too, in the great chalk quarries, he found the historic woad, concerning which "Cæsar saith," in the quaint language of Gerard, "that all the Brittons do colour themselves with woad, which giveth a blew color." Both these plants still flourish abundantly in the localities where Mill found them. The same cannot, unfortunately, be said of the magnificent royal fern, *Osmunda regalis*, which Mill tells us grew in some swamps near Dorking,

" so as to form large and tall thickets visible at a great distance," or of the very rare man-orchis, *Aceras anthropophora*, which he found " growing profusely on Colley and Buckland Hills and between Box Hill and Juniper Hill." When on a visit to the Isle of Wight Mill noticed on the shore of Sandown Bay a single specimen of the purple spurge, the only record of this extraordinarily scarce plant in the island. The specimen is still preserved, the most interesting, alike for its rarity and on account of its finder, in the Bromfield collection of island plants. After the death of his wife at Avignon, in 1859, Mill bought a cottage near to the place of her burial, and there he mainly resided during the remainder of his life. He found some consolation in his love of wild flowers and busied himself in gathering together materials for a *Flora of Avignon*. Only three days before his death he walked over fifteen miles in search of some rare species. His herbarium of British plants he bequeathed to the museum at Kew.

Passing from philosophers to poets, we should not unnaturally expect to find among the latter a larger number of individuals interested in our native flora. Our literature abounds in passages in which the praises of the country-side are sung. And yet, apparently, but few of our poets cared for the pursuit of herbalising. There are many interesting allusions to wild flowers in the plays of Shakespeare and in the poems of Milton, but they are more or less of a literary character. Neither Thomson, who in his *Seasons* revived the poetry of nature, nor Wordsworth, though he celebrated the daisy and the celandine and the daffodil, nor Cowper, though he recognised the intimate charm of country life,

nor Keble, in spite of his stanzas to the snowdrop, can be regarded in any sense as field botanists. There are, however, a few exceptions, among whom may be mentioned John Clare, the peasant poet of Northamptonshire, Thomas Gray and George Crabbe, Matthew Arnold and Lord Tennyson.

There is no more pathetic figure in English literature than that of John Clare, of Helpstone, who passed the earlier portion of his life in abject poverty and the latter part in the prison-house of an asylum. But such happiness as at times was vouchsafed to him was due entirely to his love of nature, and especially of wild flowers. Of Tennyson's interest in things botanical it is unnecessary to speak. His poems contain numberless passages which illustrate his close acquaintance with our wayside flora. Now it is a "flower in the crannied wall"; now the "golden hour" of the dark yew, "when flower is feeling after flower"; now "the faint, sweet cuckoo-flower" or the "blue forget-me-not"; and now "the fruit which in our winter woodland looks a flower." What more striking description of an English wood in May, when the bluebells or wild hyacinths are a "paradise of blossom," than these lines in *Guinevere*:

> "sheets of hyacinth
> That seem'd the heavens upbreaking thro' the earth"!

Or we call to mind the exquisite spring picture in the *In Memoriam*:

> "Now fades the last long streak of snow,
> Now burgeons every maze of quick
> About the flowering squares, and thick
> By ashen roots the violets blow";

or the following lines which, in the same poem, reveal the poet's longing for the flowers of spring :—

"Dip down upon the northern shore,
O sweet new-year delaying long ;
Thou dost expectant nature wrong ;
Delaying long, delay no more.

Bring orchis, bring the foxglove spire,
The little speedwell's darling blue,
Deep tulips dash'd with fiery dew,
Laburnums, dropping—wells of fire."

But it is probably unknown to most readers of the famous *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* that the favourite study of the poet Gray, during the last ten years of his life, was the study of natural history. After the manner of Gilbert White, who, unknown to the poet, was making similar observations at Selborne, Gray kept a calendar in which he noted the opening of flowers and the arrival of birds. Thus on 12th February 1763 crocuses and hepatica were blossoming through the snow in the garden of Pembroke College, Cambridge ; on 21st February the first white butterfly appeared ; on 5th March he heard the thrush sing and a few days later the skylark. In botany he took a special interest. He studied the subject in Hudson's *Flora Anglica* and in the *Systema Naturæ* of Linnæus. A copy of this latter work, the tenth edition, published in 1758, Gray had interleaved, and this volume, with voluminous notes and beautifully illustrated with pen-and-ink sketches, eventually came into the possession of Mr Ruskin. On Ruskin's death this copy passed to Mrs Arthur Severn, who presented it to Charles Eliot

Norton. Mr Norton showed his appreciation of the gift by publishing in America a little volume entitled *The Poet Gray as a Naturalist,* in which he presents us with a selection of Gray's notes and with facsimiles of some of the pages. The notes, written in a small, clear handwriting, reveal the poet's accuracy and power of observation, while the sketches illustrate the excellence of his drawings, especially of birds and insects. This interleaved copy of Linnæus remains the chief memorial of Gray's occupation during the last few years of his life. Mr Norton does not tell us what became of the poet's copy of Hudson's *Flora,* but the interleaved Linnæus has found a home in Harvard University Library.

So many are the allusions to wild flowers in Crabbe's poems that readers of *The Borough* and *The Tales* would naturally infer that the poet must have been a botanist. And the conclusion is abundantly confirmed by what we learn from other sources. " From early life to his latest years," his son tells us in an interesting Memoir, " my father cultivated the study of botany with fond zeal, both in books and in the fields." While practising as an apothecary at Aldeburgh, and afterwards as a clergyman in Leicestershire and in Suffolk, George Crabbe found in botany his main recreation. Like his own " village priest " in *Tales of the Hall,*

> " He knew the plants in mountain, wood, and mead ;
> . . . all that lived or moved
> Were books to him ; he studied them and loved."

It was his custom to copy into notebooks long passages from rare or expensive works on botany, " of which his situation could only permit him to obtain a temporary loan." Several of these notebooks have been happily

preserved, and through the kindness and courtesy of Mr John Murray I have had the rare pleasure and privilege of examining them. They consist for the most part of extracts, written in a singularly clear and beautiful hand, from botanical transactions, such as those of the Linnæan Society, and from such works as Curtis's *Flora Londinensis*, together with observations on mosses, fungi and ferns. One notebook contains no less than fifty pages relating to British fungi, copied out, in the same exquisite handwriting, from Withering's *Botany*; another notebook deals with the sedges, and also includes long descriptions, taken from Withering, of British seaweeds. Occasionally we meet with remarks on the medicinal virtues of plants, an aspect of botany which was doubtless of special interest to one who had practised as an apothecary.

At one time Crabbe contemplated writing an English treatise on botany. Indeed the work was virtually completed, when, in consequence of the criticism of the Vice-Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, who could not tolerate the idea of "degrading the science of botany by treating it in a modern language," Crabbe flung the manuscript into the fire. The poet often regretted this hasty action in after years, as otherwise he might have had the honour of being the recognised discoverer of more than one species of the British flora. He would specially mention a rare clover, which he found on the seashore at Aldeburgh, and which the distinguished botanist, Sir Joseph Banks, identified as *Trifolium suffocatum*, a species hitherto unknown in England. This particular specimen is now preserved in the Banks Herbarium in the British Museum. It would take up too much space to attempt to treat the botanical allu-

sions to be found in Crabbe's poems. It must be sufficient to say that those allusions are most frequent in the poems associated with Aldeburgh. A few summers ago I visited Aldeburgh for the express purpose of comparing its flora to-day with what it was when Crabbe wrote *The Borough*. Almost all the poet's plants still remain. The Roman nettle is, however, gone, as is also the sea cotton-weed from the shingle beach between Slaughden Quay and Hollesley Bay. But the rare and interesting sea-pea (*Lathyrus maritimus*) continues to flourish in abundance near Orford lighthouse and the little sickle-medick in Dunwich churchyard.

Matthew Arnold doubtless inherited from his father the keen interest in wild flowers, which increased with advancing years. Many of his poems abound in allusions to the simple species of the country-side ; but the most noted, which illustrate alike the scenes above Oxford and the wild plants to be found there, are *The Scholar Gipsy* and *Thyrsis*. These may be called the two great Oxford poems, and the pleasant country on the Berkshire side of the Thames, within a few miles of Oxford, will always be associated with Arnold's name. There he loved to wander on foot with Thyrsis, or some other congenial friend, through the two Hinkseys, where " nothing keeps the same," along the track by Childsworth Farm, " past the high wood, to where the elm-tree crowns the hill," and where he " knew each field, each flower, each stick." As Tennyson liked to think of his lost companion as at least laid in English earth, beneath the clover sod, that takes the sunshine and the rain,

> " And from his ashes may be made
> The violet of his native land " ;

so with Matthew Arnold and the Scholar Gipsy. "Thou from the earth art gone long since," he cries,

> "and in some quiet churchyard laid—
> Some country nook, where o'er thy unknown grave
> Tall grasses and white-flowering nettles wave,
> Under a dark, red-fruited yew-tree's shade."

How "he loved each simple joy the country yields," especially the "store of flowers"—"the frail-leaf'd, white anemone," "dark bluebells drenched with dews," the "purple orchises with spotted leaves," the "Cumnor cowslips," the "red loosestrife and blond meadow-sweet"! And the "wide fields of breezy grass" above Godstow Bridge appealed to him, and "the wood which hides the daffodil," and the swamps where in May the fritillary blossomed! "I know," he cried,

> "I know what white, what purple fritillaries
> The grassy harvest of the river-fields
> Above by Ensham, down by Sandford, yields,
> And what sedged brooks are Thames's tributaries."

Above all, perhaps, he loved the "lone, sky-pointing tree," "that lonely tree against the western sky."

Charles Kingsley was a poet as well as a parson and a novelist. He was also deeply interested in science, and once said that he would rather occupy a comparatively lowly place in the roll of science than a higher one in that of literature. To his love of natural history his lectures on geology delivered at Chester, his papers on the "wonders of the seashore" in *Glaucus*, and on the "charm of birds" in *Prose Idylls*, bear abundant evidence. But with him, as with Matthew Arnold, botany was the favourite recreation. As a schoolboy at Helston, in Cornwall, under the influence and in-

spiration of the Rev. C. A. Johns, the author of the well-known *Flowers of the Field*, Kingsley's taste, or rather passion, for botany was encouraged and developed, and ever afterwards, in his parish of Eversley, at Chester, where he was a canon, in his frequent holidays in Devonshire, the study of wild flowers was an absorbing recreation. How he delighted in the flora of the moorland which constituted so large a portion of his parish! How could his life, he asks in his *Winter Garden*, be monotonous when there were so many wonders awaiting explanation? What, for instance, " makes *Erica Tetralix* grow in one soil, and the bracken in another? How did three species of club-moss—one of them quite an Alpine one—get down here, all the way from Wales perhaps, upon this isolated patch of grass? Why did the little mousetail, *Myosurus minimus*, which I had hunted for in vain for fourteen years, appear by dozens in the fifteenth, upon a new-made bank, which had been for at least two hundred years a farmyard gateway "?

Such botanical puzzles were to him a source of constant interest and pleasure. At Chester he established a botanical class, with a weekly ramble in search of wild flowers. At first, we are told, the class was watched from the city walls with some surprise and amusement, but before long the gathering became so large that a man who met them supposed them to be a congregation going to the opening of a Dissenting chapel in the country. When at length the desire of his life was gratified, and in company with his daughter he visited the tropics, readers of *At Last* will remember how he gloried in the amazing vegetation. And later, when he paid a visit to America, how the Californian

flora appealed to him! "Flowers," he wrote home, "most lovely and wonderful. We are making a splendid collection. Rose and the local botanist got more than fifty new sorts one morning." Not many months after his return Kingsley lay dying of pneumonia in Eversley Rectory. He was kept constantly, we are told, under the influence of opiates to quiet the cough and keep off hæmorrhage, but his dreams were always of his travels in the West Indies and the Rocky Mountains and of the beautiful things that he had there seen.

Among scholars of textual criticism no name stands higher than that of Professor Hort, who, in conjunction with Dr Westcott, brought out the famous edition of the Greek Testament. He may be taken as an illustration of that love of botany which not infrequently has been associated with the highest scholarship. As a boy at Rugby, perhaps owing to the influence of Dr Arnold, he became much interested in wild flowers, and his school diary contains a number of entries as to the finding of uncommon plants. At Cambridge he was fortunate in winning the friendship of Professor C. C. Babington, with whom he would go for long botanical walks, and under whose guidance he worked diligently at the brambles and other difficult genera. After taking a First Class in the Classical Tripos of 1850, he entered the following year for the Natural Sciences Tripos, when he again won a First Class, with "distinction in botany." It was mostly his custom in after years to spend his holidays in Switzerland, and the tours were always arranged with reference to his favourite pursuit. In time, as the result of repeated Alpine expeditions, he collected a fine herbarium of Swiss plants, while his

botanical contributions to Mr John Ball's *Alpine Guides* were recognised as of the utmost value. Many of his excursions were taken in company with Mr Ball, of which there are fascinating descriptions in several of his published letters.

On one occasion, to his intense delight, Hort found near Cogne the very rare *Astragalus alopecuroides*, a plant which had not been recorded in that district for over half-a-century, and " which alone was worth coming to Cogne for." One summer he stayed a fortnight on the top of the Stelvio Pass, and, when a friend expressed surprise that he and his wife could linger for so long in such an unattractive place, he replied with perfect simplicity : " Oh, but we have found fourteen new plants." During his last visit to Switzerland, undertaken in the hope that it might possibly restore his broken health, the Alpine flora was a constant solace and delight to him. He managed to travel as far as Saas-Fee, a favourite haunt of his, and, though too weak to walk far from his hotel, he found a joy and interest in " the daily bouquet of Alpine flowers " which was brought to him. In the last letter which he wrote to his youngest daughter from Saas-Fee he dwelt with admiration on the rare white *Geranium aconitifolium*, and " the exquisite blue Alpine columbine, with flowers not so large as I have sometimes seen it, but large enough to satisfy any reasonable person."

As another illustration of an interest in wild flowers among distinguished scholars the name of Professor Cowell may be recalled. He was Professor of Sanskrit in the University of Cambridge and the lifelong friend of Edward FitzGerald, to whom he introduced *Omar Khayyám*. When Cowell was Principal of the San-

skrit College at Calcutta he read with much interest a book by Professor Balfour, of Edinburgh, entitled *Botany and Religion*, and he resolved, should he ever return to England, to enter on the study of botany. Some years later the opportunity presented itself. Cowell found himself at Cambridge as the first Professor of Sanskrit, and Fellow of Corpus. His health was indifferent and he was advised to take more regular exercise. His friends urged him to begin the study of wild flowers, and Professor Babington offered himself as a companion in botanical rambles. Cowell, mindful of his Indian resolution, eagerly adopted the suggestion and set himself to master the elements of the science. Exercise now became a delight to him. Indeed, so successful was the new pursuit that the walks, we are told, were not confined to Cambridge, but expeditions were made to neighbouring counties, and holidays were thenceforward made invigorating and really refreshing in the ardent search for rare plants. In subsequent years Cowell succeeded in collecting a nearly complete flora of the county of Cambridge.

His letters reveal how keen was his interest in herbalising and how diligently he informed himself of the habitats of rare species. Now he is searching for *Cotoneaster* on the Great Orme's Head, its only locality in Great Britain. Now he is at Ventnor, in the Isle of Wight, seeking, but unsuccessfully, for the scarce and curious mousetail. Again he is delighted at finding, near Shelford, a fine patch of the marsh-helleborine. A copy of John Ray's *Flora of Cambridgeshire*, published in 1660, the first county flora ever produced, which he picked up on a second-hand bookstall, fills him with enthusiasm, and he is charmed when he discovers at

Chesterton a quantity of the beautiful little moschatel growing on the very spot where Ray recorded it in the seventeenth century. When an old man, several years past seventy, he insisted, one hot July day, on walking many miles to see if a rare geranium still maintained its old position near the Redcross turnpike.

That men of science should be interested in botany is more in accordance with the natural order of things. Indeed in former times herbalism and medicine were intimately associated together, and many of our early botanists were physicians. Dr Turner, "the father of English botany," was a physician before he became a divine and Dean of Wells. So with most of the Continental herbalists of the sixteenth century. Leonard Fuchs, the author of the most splendid herbal ever published, was a physician ; so was Dodoens, the Dutch herbalist ; and L'Obel, who was physician to William the Silent ; and Mattioli, the great Italian botanist ; and the two eminent brothers, Jean and Gaspard Bauhin. In modern times the association no longer exists, but a notable illustration of a celebrated surgeon and man of science who found in wild flowers his recreation is seen in the life of Lord Lister, one of the greatest benefactors of mankind. During his career as a medical student Lister made the acquaintance of Professor Lindley, the distinguished botanist, and the friendship left a lasting influence on his life. Lister learnt from him the love of wild flowers which gave him so keen a pleasure in after years. During his holidays in Switzerland and at home he collected and carefully preserved the choicer species he met with, and his herbarium of Alpine plants became eventually a large and valuable one. It was not as a scientific botanist

that he pursued his hobby, but as a simple lover of the beauty and interest of wild flowers. He found no distraction from the hours of hospital duties more gentle and effective, we are told, than that which the bright blossoms of the country-side afforded him.

Such are some of those who among our famous men of science and literature have found in wild flowers a recreation and a delight. The list might, of course, be considerably extended. But sufficient has been said to substantiate the statement with which we started, that others beside Dr Arnold have found in wild flowers the music of their lives.

CHAPTER II

AN OLD HERBAL

ONE morning, a few years since, I was working in the botanical department of the British Museum of Natural History at South Kensington when the Keeper of Botany came to where I was sitting and whispered that when I was disengaged he had an old book to show me. Crossing over into one of the window recesses, he produced a folio copy of the first edition of Fuchs' *History of Plants*, published at Basle in the year 1542. It was, he said, the most magnificent herbal ever published, and placing it on a desk he proceeded to show me the exquisite woodcuts. I had never seen the work before and was naturally delighted with its beauty and interest. Mr Britten suggested that I should write an article on the Herbal, to which, he said, adequate justice had never been done.

It was difficult, however, to write an appreciation of a folio volume of 900 pages, enriched with over 500 full-page illustrations, without some further opportunity for careful study, and at the time such opportunity did not present itself. The book is a very scarce one and probably but few copies are to be found in England, and the suggestion, therefore, of the Keeper of Botany for the time fell to the ground.

It came to pass, however, that some years later I was appointed to a residentiary canonry at Winchester, and

spending one winter's afternoon in the dark recesses of the Cathedral library, which contains little beyond ponderous works of theology, I discovered, to my amazement and delight, a copy of the same herbal which had excited my admiration in the British Museum some years before. How it came to be in such strange and solemn company there was nothing to show. But there it was, resting against an obsolete tome of seventeenth-century theology—Fuchs' botanical masterpiece, *De Historia Stirpium*, the first edition, in folio, written in Latin and containing the same magnificent illustrations. The recollection of Mr James Britten's suggestion at once came back to me, and lifting up the heavy volume, bound in the original oak boards, I carried it across the close to my prebendal quarters.

No wonder that Mr Britten praised it. The work is, beyond question, the most splendid, by reason of its superb and original woodcuts, of the many herbals which appeared in Germany, in England, in Switzerland, in Italy, in the Low Countries, during the revival of learning in the sixteenth century.

Leonhard Fuchs was born at Membdingen, in Bavaria, in the year 1501, and at the early age of thirteen is said to have graduated as B.A. at the University of Erfurt. He afterwards studied at Ingolstadt, where he took a doctor's degree, and eventually became Professor of Medicine in the University. At Ingolstadt he fell under the influence of Luther's writings and became, like so many of the Renaissance botanists, a stout Protestant. During a terrible epidemic which swept over Germany in 1529 he became widely known for his successful treatment of the disease, and it is interesting

to remember that this fame even extended to our shores, for later on there was published in London a little work of instructions against the plague, entitled "A worthy practise of the moste learned Phisition Maister Leonerd Fuchsius, Doctor in Phisicke, most necessary in this needfull tyme of our visitation, for the comforte of all good and faythfull people, both olde and yonge, both for the sicke and for them that woulde avoyde the daunger of contagion." In the year 1535 he was appointed to a professorship at the University of Tübingen, which had just adopted the Reformed Faith, and there he remained until his death in 1566. In spite of his untiring activity, alike as a professor and as a physician, he yet found time for botanical studies, and in 1542 his great Latin Herbal appeared from the well-known printing-press of Michael Isingrin of Basle. It was followed in the succeeding year by a German edition, also in folio, and with the same woodcuts, over 500 in number, of which about 400 are illustrations of indigenous German plants and 100 of foreign species. Shortly afterwards, in 1545, Isingrin printed an octavo edition of the Herbal with the same illustrations on a reduced scale. It is interesting to call to mind that, in honour of our botanist, the name of *Fuchsia* has been given to one of the handsomest of garden flowers.

No doubt it is the beauty of the illustrations that has rendered Fuchs' Herbal so justly famous. Indeed their superlative merit is generally recognised. "Fuchs' splendid figures," says Professor Von Sachs, "remain unsurpassed." "They represent," writes Mrs Agnes Arber, in her fascinating book on *Herbals*, "the high-water mark of that type of botanical drawing which seeks to express the individual character and habit of

each species." While not remarkable for their minute scientific accuracy, such as we should expect to find in modern drawings—though even in this respect they often reach a high botanical level—" they probably surpass in artistic quality," says Mr Miall, " any long series of botanical figures that has ever been published." It is this artistic quality that renders the figures so attractive. Even such a prosaic species as the wild cabbage is seen to possess an intrinsic beauty. Sometimes, as in the case of the hop, the bryony and the wild pea, the figures are arranged in a highly decorative manner so as to cover the entire folio sheet. Other woodcuts, such as those of the herb-paris, the two hellebores, the wild peony, the *cyperus* or galingale, the wild garlic and the yellow horned-poppy, are of quite extraordinary beauty. It is interesting, too, to know, not only the names, but the appearance of the artists who produced such excellent work. Very rarely is such information vouchsafed in works of this kind, but Leonhard Fuchs was clearly not unmindful of the assistance he had received from those who produced the illustrations. In addition to a fine full-paged portrait of the author, represented as holding a spray of *veronica* in his hand, which forms the frontispiece, there will be found at the end of the volume the named portraits of his three assistants—viz. the two draughtsmen, Heinricus Fullmauret and Albertus Mayer—who are seen copying a plant from nature, and the engraver, Vitus Rudolphus Specklin or Speckle, who cut the wood-blocks. In the preface to his Herbal, Fuchs thus generously acknowledges their labours : " Vitus Rudolphus Specklin, by far the best engraver of Strasburg, has admirably copied the wonderful industry of the draughtsmen, and has with such excellent

craft expressed in his engraving the features of each drawing that he seems to have contended with the draughtsmen for glory and victory."

The drawings are in outline only, with little or no shading, the work of colouring being left, as was mostly the case in similar works of this period, to the owner of the volume. The beauty of the woodcuts was at once recognised, and succeeding publishers were not slow to make use of them. Indeed, the illustrations of the octavo edition were freely pirated, and became familiar in England through their reproduction in the *Herball* of Dr Turner, Dean of Wells, "the Father of English Botany," and also in Lyte's *Niewe Herball*, published a few years later.

But while the main glory of Fuchs' Herbal is to be found in the engravings, the letterpress shows a distinct advance on previous botanical writings The descriptions of plants, especially in the German edition, are for the period remarkably good, and moreover, the Latin edition possesses a glossary of technical terms which is the first of its kind known in botanical literature. Many of these explanations are of distinct interest, as when he compares an *umbel* to the parasol or umbrella which ladies are wont to carry to keep off the heat and glare of the sun. The arrangement of species in the Herbal is alphabetical, according to the Greek names of the genera, and sometimes, after the manner of the age, plants are associated which have no scientific relationship. Thus the violet and the dame's violet are placed together, and the grass of Parnassus is reckoned among the grasses. The original edition opens with a most interesting Latin preface, from which it is abundantly clear that with Leonhard Fuchs the pursuit of botany

was one of intense personal pleasure. Unfortunately the preface is wanting in our Cathedral copy of the Herbal, but I may venture to quote the following passage from Mrs Arber's excellent translation :—

" But there is no reason why I should dilate at greater length upon the pleasantness and delight of acquiring knowledge of plants, since there is no one who does not know that there is nothing in this life pleasanter and more delightful than to wander over woods, mountains, plains, garlanded and adorned with flowerets and plants of various sorts, and most elegant to boot, and to gaze intently upon them. But it increases that pleasure and delight not a little if there be added an acquaintance with the virtues and powers of those same plants."

In turning to our Cathedral copy of Fuchs' Herbal, which possesses the original oak boards, it is interesting to find that, as was so frequently the case with the early printers, some vellum leaves of a Latin manuscript have been employed in binding, both at the beginning and end of the volume. It is also noticeable that our woodcuts have been coloured in the most accurate and artistic manner. So excellently has the work been done that it is hardly possible to believe that the illustrations are hand-painted. And the colouring is as scientifically correct as the general appearance is artistic. It is clearly the work of one who had no mean botanical knowledge. The whole of the 500 folio engravings of plants are painted, and so are the portraits of Fuchs and his assistants, and the printer's mark at the end of the volume, consisting of the well-known holly-tree, with a slab and the words *Palma. Ising.* But what gives our Cathedral copy a special and peculiar interest

is the fact that shortly after its publication in 1542 it must have come into the possession of an English botanist, who proceeded to write beneath the folio engraving of each species the English equivalent of the Latin and German names. The handwriting almost certainly belongs to the sixteenth century, and was the work of a skilled scribe. It possesses considerable distinction of style, and was written either with a reed-pen or with a broad-nibbed quill. From these English synonyms we get at first hand a knowledge of the popular names of many British plants in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. It is interesting to find that, in a large number of instances, the names remain unchanged. At first sight they may appear strange to us, in their singular "court-hand" dress and sixteenth-century orthography, but we soon recognise some well-known friends. Thus, to mention but a few instances, we meet with bryorye (bryony), mugewort (mugwort), mader (madder), borage, maretayll (mare's tail), betonye, penye wort (pennywort), mother worte (motherwort), sanicle, great and little cellandyne (celandine), gots berde (goat's-beard), hensbayne or cowebayne (henbane), fewmetrye (fumitory), eivye (ivy), spurge, houndstonge, wodebynde (woodbine) and many other familiar names.

But perhaps a deeper interest is attached to those sixteenth-century names of British plants which have now become obsolete among us. The yellow flag, so common on the banks of our streams and ditches, is called the "gladyon," and its first cousin, the blue iris, "the blewe flore de lyis." The great hellebore, which still flourishes at Selborne, is known, as it was to Gilbert White, as "the berefot" (bear's foot). Colymbine is

" columbells," and the lily of the valley is " the great parke lyllye." The very rare blue pimpernel is called the " faemayll pympernell " (Female Pimpernel) to distinguish it from the common red species. I once found this lovely little plant beneath a pear-tree in John Ray's old garden at Black Notley in Essex, and I notice that he calls it " the blew-flower'd or Female Pimpernel " in his classical *Synopsis* of British plants. It is strange to find beneath a beautiful woodcut of the snowdrop the words " the wyld whit violet." The choice, sweet-scented *Daphne mezereum* is named the " wyld laurell," and the butcher's-broom the " reed laurell." Very few species of British ferns are mentioned by Fuchs, but there are fine engravings of the adder's-tongue and the moonwort; and it is interesting to notice that our unknown English botanist calls the one " serpent-tonge " (serpent's-tongue), and the other " lunary the less." The cowslip he calls a " pagle," a name by which the plant is still known in the eastern counties. The purple *colchicum* or meadow-saffron he names " the wyld purple lillye "; and the rare martagon lily, a fine clump of which I found in a Hampshire wood last summer, is " the purple daffodyll." The different species of *orchis* were hardly discriminated in the sixteenth century, and many strange names were in popular use. Indeed, as one old herbalist says, the order " has almost as many several names attributed to the several sorts of it as would fill a sheet of paper, too tedious to reherse." It is interesting to notice that our botanist calls them " fox cods," a name rarely met with in English herbals. He thus distinguishes " great fox cods," " small fox cods," " great foemayll (female) fox cods," " triple fox cods," both " mayll " and " foemayll."

It would lend an additional interest to our Cathedral copy of Fuchs' Herbal if we could trace its "pedigree." That it is a first edition of the magnificent *De Historia Stirpium*, printed by Isingrin of Basle, and published in the year 1542, is of course certain; and that it found its way over to England shortly after its publication seems also clear. But who coloured the woodcuts? Who wrote the English names on the fine folio pages beneath the illustrations? Whose liberality bequeathed the precious volume to the Cathedral library? On these points no certain answer can be given. If, however, the English names were added at Winchester, I should be bold enough to venture a suggestion. That the writing is by a sixteenth-century hand I feel pretty certain, and that the species were named by a competent botanist is beyond question. He was a man, too, of culture and learning, as the style of writing conclusively shows, and moreover a person of means, for the volume was no inexpensive one. Was there anyone, in the second half of the sixteenth century, connected with Winchester, above all with the Cathedral, whose tastes and scientific attainments would lead him to possess a copy of the great German botanist's splendid work? I think I have discovered such an individual. On 15th March 1549, one John Warner, M.D., was installed a Prebendary of the Cathedral. Dr Warner was Warden of All Souls, Oxford, and had been appointed by Henry VIII. the first Regius Professor of Medicine in the University. Like almost all scientific men of the time, he was a sturdy Protestant, and during Queen Mary's reign was suspended from the wardenship of All Souls. On the accession of Queen Elizabeth, the Deanery of Winchester falling vacant

through the resignation of Dr Steward, who had been appointed by Queen Mary, and who doubtless shared her religious convictions, Prebendary Warner was at once nominated to the position. He was installed on 15th October 1559, and remained Dean of Winchester until his death in 1564. As Prebendary and as Dean Dr Warner was thus associated with the Cathedral for fifteen years. As a Doctor of Medicine, in an age when herbalism was intimately connected with the art of healing, we should expect him to be interested in botany. And that he was so interested is shown beyond all manner of doubt by the discovery in the Cathedral library of a botanical work bearing his signature. It is a folio copy of *De Natura Stirpium* by Joannes Ruellius, a French physician, and published by Froben at Basle in 1537. The volume, which is without illustrations and was mainly intended to elucidate the writings of the ancient botanists, is in the original leather binding, with remains of the iron clasps and with the iron rivet for a chain. It is also to be noticed that the famous printer Froben has utilised a Latin manuscript, as in the case of our Fuchs' Herbal, in the process of binding the volume. I wondered how this botanical treatise came to be in a theological library, and it was with a thrill of delight that I at length discovered the following inscription on one of the pages: "*Ex dono Do. Jo. Warneri nuper decani Wynton.*" I have also discovered a similar entry in a folio copy of Dioscorides' *De Medica Materia*, published at Cologne in 1529: "*Liber Joanis Warneri.*" But for the Dean's name in Fuchs' Herbal I have searched the nine hundred pages in vain. Too much, however, must not be made of this fact. It was not the general custom

among scholars in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to inscribe their names in their books, and book-plates were almost unknown. And that Fuchs' Herbal would have strongly appealed to our botanical Dean must be allowed. Moreover, he must have heard of its publication from his contemporary, Dr Turner, the Dean of Wells. Dr Turner was also a doctor of medicine, and though a Cambridge man had stayed up at Oxford when Dr Warner was Warden of All Souls and Professor of Medicine " for conversation of men and books," and the two men in all probability must have met. At any rate they would know each other as the respective deans of not far distant cathedrals. Dr Turner, too, was a correspondent of Leonhard Fuchs, and moreover utilised his friends' woodcuts to illustrate his own Herbal. It is impossible, therefore, that our Dean could have been ignorant of the magnificent work of the great German botanist, and it would be pleasant to think that when a copy was sent over from Basle to Dr Turner another had been dispatched to Dr Warner, and that this copy he afterwards bequeathed, with the *De Medica Materia* of Dioscorides and the *De Natura Stirpium* of Ruellius, to the Cathedral library. If this tracing of the " pedigree " be correct, and it will be admitted that it is not impossible, then an additional interest is attached to our fine copy of Fuchs' Herbal, which in itself is not the least precious volume in our collection.

CHAPTER III

HAMPSHIRE YEWS

THERE is no reason to doubt that the yew-tree is indigenous in this country. It is more frequently seen in the south of England than in the north, and in the counties of Sussex, Surrey, Hampshire, and Wiltshire, than elsewhere. And of these counties Hampshire is its favourite home. Indeed it is so generally met with in the uplands of Hampshire, scattered singly over the rolling chalk downs or rising in majesty from some ancient hedgerow, or clinging perhaps to the almost perpendicular face of one of our hanging woods, that the yew has been called, not inaptly, "the Hampshire weed." Its wide distribution in the county was noticed by the early botanical writers. Mr John Goodyer, a famous "searcher after simples," writing to the editor of the second edition of Gerard's *Herbal* on 19th December 1621, says: "In Hampshire there is good plenty of yew-trees growing wilde on the chalkie hills, and in church-yards where they have been planted." The yew-tree is characteristic of our churchyards, where many noble specimens, magnificent even in decay, may be seen. In the possession of churchyard yews Hampshire stands undoubtedly ahead of any other county.

There is a strange fascination about a venerable yew-tree standing perhaps alone in its glory on some lonely

down, or in some sequestered churchyard. "Fear and trembling Hope, Silence and Foresight, Death the skeleton, and Time the shadow" seem, as Wordsworth said, associated with it. Who can forget his lines on the yew-tree of Lorton Vale:

> "Which to this day stands singly, in the midst
> Of its own darkness, as it stood of yore;
> Of vast circumference and gloom profound
> This solitary Tree!—a living thing
> Produced too slowly ever to decay;
> Of form and aspect too magnificent
> To be destroyed."

Hampshire can show many such lordly yew-trees. The open downs around Winchester, and in the north of the county, are dotted here and there with yews, some of them of vast antiquity. They are frequent, too, in the wide, tangled hedgerows which often border some ancient track, such as the Pilgrim's Way. The Roman Road, which formerly ran from Winchester to Sarum, now a grassy track through a lonely stretch of most attractive country, is indicated here and there by yew-trees. So with the historic lane known as "the king's lane," overgrown in places with brambles and blackthorn—along which one day in August, 1100, the body of the Red King, dripping gore all the way, was borne in a "crazy two-wheeled cart of a charcoal burner, drawn by a sorry nag," from the New Forest to Winchester—yew-trees mark its course between Hursley and the cathedral city. In other parts of the county, as around Selborne and Hambledon, where steep "hangers" are a distinguishing feature of the country-side, the dark green, almost black, foliage of the yew mingles in delightful contrast with the lighter

verdure of the beeches. There are also many noble specimens to be seen in the New Forest, in spite of the fact that the yew-tree, being unprotected by forest laws, has often, as Gilpin tells us, "been made booty of by those who durst not lay violent hands on the oak or the ash." And no tree is more valuable for posts and rails. A post of yew, say the squatters of the Forest, will outlast a post of iron. Still there are a number of fine yews left. One tree of peculiar beauty occupied a small knoll not far from Boldre Church, which was a special favourite with the author of *Forest Scenery*, for "in point of picturesque beauty" it probably equalled, he considered, any yew-tree in the country. At Sloden, too, not far from the spot where Rufus fell, there is "a thick wood of yews, standing massive and black; in all their depth of foliage mixed, in loveliest contrast, with clumps of white-beams."

Hampshire, too, possesses the finest yew avenue in England. This remarkable stretch of trees is situated in the parish of Chilton Candover, some five miles from Alresford, where for more than half-a-mile it runs from the high road to the site of a Saxon church, unfortunately pulled down in 1876, and an ancient mansion now also destroyed. The trees stand about forty feet apart, their branches joining for the most part throughout the entire length. The effect produced is most striking. It is difficult to estimate, with any degree of certainty, the age of yew-trees; but in the opinion of experts the avenue was probably planted in the fourteenth or fifteenth century.

That the yew-tree has the singular power of renewing, as it were, its youth, is well known to all lovers of nature. When an ancient trunk has become decayed

and hollow, a new stem or branch will sometimes be found growing within the old shell. Numberless instances are on record. Thus at Upper Clatford, near Andover, there is a fine old yew-tree with no less than thirteen separate stems growing from the hollow shell. Other instances in Hampshire may be seen at Mottisfont on the Test, at West Tisted, at Corhampton in the Meon Valley, and other places.

When growing naturally there are few more striking objects on the country-side than a stately yew-tree. In its spring dress, when the branches are covered with dusty blossoms, an old male yew presents a beautiful appearance. It seems to change its colour, as Mr Dewar has pointed out, when viewed from different positions. "By mid-March it does not look green in some lights; at any rate, green is not its chief colour. We see yews a hundred yards away of a red or brown colour, which, on nearer inspection, alter to a flesh tint." Charming too, as Charles Waterton says in one of his *Essays on Natural History*, is the appearance of the female tree after the sun has passed the autumnal equinox. "The delicate crimson of its fruit, with the dark green leaves behind it, produces an effect so pleasing to the view that it can scarcely be surpassed by anything which the southern forests present to the lover of beauty."

But the yew has suffered from superstitious associations, both in ancient and in mediæval times. It was doubtless regarded as a sacred tree in the days of the Druids. The poets give to it such epithets as "dismal," and "fatal," and even "double fatal." "Slips of yew silvered in the moon's eclipse" formed part of the ingredients of the witches' cauldron in *Macbeth*. In

popular imagination, the tree was so venomous that "the fruit thereof being eaten is not onely dangerous and deadly unto man, but if any doe sleepe under the shadow thereof it causeth sicknesse and oftentimes death." It is interesting to notice that this opinion was too much for even old Gerard, the herbalist, whose work is full of strange conceits and startling superstitions. After mentioning the vulgar belief, he goes on to say: "All which I dare boldly affirme is altogether untrue; for when I was yong and went to schoole, divers of my schoole-fellowes and likewise my selfe did eat our fils of the berries of this tree, and have not onely slept under the shadow thereof, but among the branches also, without any hurt at all, and that not one time, but many times." The same testimony is borne by the early botanist, L'Obel; and Sir Thomas Browne, in his *Vulgar Errors*, boldly declares: "That yew and the berries thereof are harmlesse, we know." It should, however, be added that, in spite of these emphatic assertions cases are on record of children being poisoned by yew berries, although it appears that the mischief was rather due to the hard, green seeds than to the succulent scarlet covering. To cows and horses the tree is a deadly poison, as many farmers have found to their cost, and even the clippings of a yew hedge thrown inadvertently into a yard have been known to destroy a whole dairy of cows. And yet, strange to say, as Gilbert White has pointed out, "sheep and turkeys and, as park-keepers say, deer, will crop these trees with impunity."

But noted as Hampshire is for the prevalence of indigenous yew-trees scattered throughout the country, it is no less remarkable for its churchyard yews. In

the north of England the ash, the lime and the horse-chestnut are more frequently found in churchyards, but in Hampshire there is hardly a churchyard without its yew-tree, sometimes of the most venerable antiquity. Many are the theories as to why our forefathers planted yew-trees in churchyards. It has been suggested that the custom arose in order to supply material for the manufacture of bows, or to screen the churches from the violence of storms, or to afford shelter to the congregation waiting for the service on Sundays. But these theories are, in the highest degree, unlikely. Other antiquarians have seen in the churchyard yew an emblem of mortality, from its sombre and funereal appearance ; others, like the illustrious John Ray, an emblem rather of immortality, from its ever-green foliage and the immense age to which it will attain ; while other authorities assert that in mediæval times the branches were commonly used instead of palms for the processions on Palm Sunday and on other occasions. There is much to be said for these latter suggestions. The yew-tree clearly had some religious significance. Shakespeare speaks of a " shroud of white, stuck all with yew." But the religious significance doubtless went back, as we have seen, to pagan times. Later on, it would seem, when Christianity was introduced into England, the good monks, mindful of the instructions of Pope Gregory, and desiring to deal gently with their new converts, enriched the pagan conceptions with Christian ideals. In some instances there is reason to believe that a Christian church was intentionally erected by the side of a " sacred tree " ; in other cases a yew was deliberately planted at the time of the erection of the building, and when at length a Christian

symbolism came to be associated with yew-trees, it became customary to plant them in churchyards generally.

In support of this contention, it is noteworthy that, in the case of several of our Hampshire churches which date back to Anglo-Saxon times, a venerable yew-tree, at least coeval with the church, stands beside it ; while, in more than one instance, the yew seems to be older than the church, and doubtless the church owes its position to the yew-tree and not the yew-tree to the church. Thus, on the northern slope of Portsdown Hill, not far from the Nelson Monument, stands the little Saxon church of Boarhunt. It is mentioned in Domesday Book, and part of the present structure—the walls, the chancel arch, and one of the windows—dates back to the days of Edward the Confessor. Near the south doorway stands a yew-tree of hoary antiquity. The trunk is hollow and is capable of holding a goodly number of persons. It must have been a fine tree when the church was built, nearly nine hundred years ago. The tiny church of Corhampton presents another instance in point. The church is remarkable, not only for its undoubted pre-Conquest features, but also for possessing a Saxon sundial on the south wall of the nave. Within a few yards of the sundial stands the ancient yew-tree, the trunk of which measures over 22 feet in circumference, and which was probably a flourishing tree, held in reverence by the Jutish tribesmen who occupied the Meon Valley when good Bishop Wilfred preached to them the Gospel. Another pre-Norman church is to be seen at Breamore, on the confines of the New Forest, and here, too, a yew-tree of most venerable antiquity stands in the churchyard.

Like the Boarhunt tree, it is completely hollow, and the bole measures in circumference no less than 23 feet 4 inches. In these instances the yew-trees are probably older than the churches by the side of which they flourish, and were doubtless regarded with veneration before the Christian edifice gave them an additional sanctity.

Among the finest yews in Hampshire must undoubtedly be included the classic tree in Selborne churchyard. Gilbert White, in one of his Letters, thus speaks of it : " In the churchyard of this village is a yew-tree, whose aspect bespeaks it to be of a great age ; it seems to have seen several centuries, and is probably coeval with the church, and therefore may be deemed an antiquity ; the body is squat, short, and thick, and measures (upwards of) twenty-three feet in the girth, supporting a head of suitable extent to its bulk. This is a male tree which in the spring sheds clouds of dust, and fills the atmosphere with its farina." Much interest has, not unnaturally, been taken in the Selborne yew-tree, and it has been visited by many naturalists. Thirty years after White's death William Cobbett, on one of his " Rural Rides," passed through Selborne, when, under date " Thursday, 7th August, 1823," he writes : " I measured the yew-tree in the churchyard, and found the trunk to be, according to my measurement, twenty-three feet eight inches in circumference. The whole tree," he adds, " appears to be in perfect health." In the year 1844, Dr Bell Salter, a distinguished botanist, made the measurement to be 24 feet 8 inches, but mentions that the vicar of the parish informed him that " at one part it measured twenty-seven feet." I myself measured the famous tree a few years back, and found

the trunk to be, at four feet from the ground, where it seemed to be the largest, 25 feet 2 inches. Besides occasionally helping the Vicar of Selborne, Gilbert White, it will be remembered, was for a short time Sunday curate at Durley, near Bishop's Waltham, and for nearly twenty-five years curate of Farringdon, a small village about three miles from Selborne. It is curious to notice that enormous yew-trees lend distinction to the churchyards of both Durley and Farringdon. The trunk of the Durley tree measures 24 feet 6 inches in circumference, while the Farringdon tree, which is in a state of great decay, is said to measure over 30 feet.

Many yew-trees have been claimed as the largest and most magnificent specimens in Hampshire. William Gilpin, in his classical work on *Forest Scenery*, published in 1791, would give the place of honour to the immense yew in the churchyard of Dibden. "It is now," he wrote, "in the decline of life. But its hollow trunk still supports three vast stems, and measures below them about thirty feet in circumference—a girth which perhaps no other yew-tree in England can exhibit." Mr Dewar considers that "the greatest and perhaps the oldest" yew-tree in Hampshire is the magnificent ruin to be seen in the churchyard of Woodcot in the north of the county. It is sadly battered about, owing to the exposed situation, but it still shows "considerable signs of vitality," and its trunk has a circumference of 27 feet 6 inches. From a picturesque standpoint there are few finer yew-trees than the beautiful example standing in Brockenhurst churchyard, which, "from the Conqueror's day to this hour has darkened the graves of generations." I should feel inclined, however, with the late Mr T. W. Shore, to give the palm to

the truly noble specimen in the churchyard of South Hayling. It stands near the south porch of the church, which is the usual situation of our most venerable churchyard yews. At a distance of four feet from the ground its trunk has a circumference of 35 feet, while its branches spread over a surface more than 20 yards in diameter.

Any notice of our Hampshire yews would be incomplete without mention of a few other examples of exceptional size and interest. At Hurstbourne Priors and at St Mary Bourne, in the valley of the Upper Test, splendid yew-trees, whose "thousand years of gloom" would seem to be no exaggeration, give sombre dignity to the churchyards. The church of St Mary Bourne is noteworthy as possessing one of the seven Norman fonts of black marble from Tournai in Belgium, which were brought over to England in the second half of the twelfth century, probably during the episcopate of Henry de Blois, younger brother of King Stephen. Another of these famous fonts stands in the nave of Winchester Cathedral. It is interesting to think that the fine yew-tree, then in comparative youth, standing in the churchyard of St Mary Bourne, must have witnessed the arrival of the massive marble font and its erection in the Norman church. Other notable yew-trees are to be seen in the churchyards of Warblington, of Colmer, of Prior's Dean, of West Tisted, near Alton; and of Hound, near Netley Abbey.

In comparatively modern times the age of a churchyard yew is sometimes revealed by a record in the parish register. Thus at St Mary Bourne we meet with the entry under 11th April 1759: "For setting ye yew-tree, 6s. 6d." This tree, which stands at a respectful

distance from its mighty neighbour, was planted over the grave of one Paul Holdway, to prevent the remains, so it was said, from being disturbed. Other entries with reference to the planting of churchyard yews are to be found in the parish records of Hurstbourne Tarrant in 1692, of Basingstoke in 1694 and again in 1745, of Binstead in 1754, of Wyke near Winchester, in 1762, and elsewhere. Occasionally the planting of a yew-tree has associations of peculiar interest. Shortly after the Restoration, Thomas Ken, the author of *Our Morning and Evening Hymns*, afterwards Bishop of Bath and Wells, was appointed by Bishop Morley to the rectory of East Woodhay in the north of Hampshire. He held the living only from 1669 to 1672, but he signalised his residence by planting a yew-tree in the churchyard, on the north side of the church. The tree is now therefore nearly two hundred and fifty years old. But so slow is the growth of the yew-tree, after the first hundred years, that its trunk now measures only 7 feet 7 inches in circumference. This gives some idea of the vast age of those venerable giants which can show a girth measurement of 25 or even 30 feet. That the growth is at first comparatively rapid is demonstrated by a number of examples, of which the following historic instance may be selected. In the churchyard of Portchester, of which parish I was once the vicar, again on the north side of the church, a yew-tree of respectable appearance may be seen. The church stands within the Roman enclosure of Portchester Castle, where, during the Napoleonic wars, a large number of French prisoners were confined. It appears that the smoke from the French kitchens effectually destroyed the venerable yew-tree which had stood for centuries beside the

Norman church. On the declaration of peace, and the departure of the prisoners in 1814, the churchwardens, so we learn from their account-book, planted a new yew-tree in the place of the one destroyed. The tree is therefore over one hundred years old, and the trunk now measures 7 feet 2 inches in circumference. It will probably not be very much larger a century hence.

It is a curious fact that while the yew-tree is so common on the mainland of the county as to have gained for it the name of "the Hampshire weed," it is exceedingly scarce in the Isle of Wight. Although the geological conditions are practically identical, yet the downs of the island are almost entirely destitute of yews. There are one or two trees on the chalk down above Nunwell, and that is all. This doubtless accounts for the fact that the yew is almost entirely absent from the island churchyards. I can only recall a single instance of a yew-tree in any of the churchyards of the Isle of Wight.

CHAPTER IV

THE OLD WALLS OF WINCHESTER

THERE is a charm and fascination about old walls which appeal to all lovers of antiquity. They lend a sense of awe and mystery to their surroundings, and inspire the imagination with quickening thoughts of bygone generations. The Roman walls of Silchester and Portchester in Hampshire, the mediæval town walls of Southampton, the monastic walls which formerly enclosed the splendid abbeys of Netley and Beaulieu and Quarr, all speak persuasively of the past. So with the ancient walls of Winchester, of which long stretches are still standing. Sections of the wall which once encompassed the mediæval city may be seen, sometimes hidden away in gardens and backyards. The Cathedral Close is shut in by the lofty, monastic walls of the once-famous Benedictine priory. Wykeham's College of "Sainte Marie of Wynchestre" and Cardinal Beaufort's noble Hospital of St Cross alike show fine stretches of mediæval masonry, on which many a choice wild flower blossoms in peace. Nor are interesting examples of early brickwork wanting. Long walls of masonry, with the comparatively thin red bricks arranged in ancient fashion, first a line of "headers" and then of "stretchers" placed in alternate rows, may be seen at College and within the Close, reminding us of the period between the Reformation and the Commonwealth, or

when, after the Restoration, Charles II. loved to frequent the ancient capital of England.

These old walls, attractive as they are to the archæologist and the historian, appeal no less strongly to the botanist. Ancient walls may be said to carry a flora of their own, and many a rare and interesting species has made its home on the walls of Winchester. Perhaps the oldest wall, which formerly formed part of the defences of the city, is to be seen at the eastern side of the grounds of Wolvesey Palace. It is made of flint and concrete, and shows what is known as "long and short" masonry, herringbone flint-work, with a large number of Roman bricks built into it. This wall is a veritable rock-garden in spring and summer-time. Numbers of comparatively inconspicuous plants, such as the little white whitlow-grass, the "darling blue" speedwell, the tiny pearlwort, the rue-leaved saxifrage, are abundant. Early in May the wallflower begins to open, and by the middle of the month will be in full bloom. It covers the broken walls, and the picturesque ruins of Wolvesey hard by, in glorious profusion. Later on the wild snapdragon will be in flower, and the purple foxglove, and the ploughman's spikenard; while masses of the fragrant thyme will blossom in the crumbling masonry, and tall spikes of the great yellow mullein will stand sentinel over the quiet scene.

Nothing can exceed the beauty of the Close walls when the familiar gillyflower gilds with its pale yellow blossoms the grey masonry. But choicer species may be seen. On one length of wall, which separates a prebendal garden from the Cathedral graveyard, a colony of the blue fleabane (*Erigeron acre, L.*) has established

itself. The blue fleabane, which is by no means a common plant, is usually found on downs or heathlands, but there, on the coping of the Canon's wall, it blossoms every summer, in company with a patch of delicate hair-bell, which also loves the open country. Strange to say, the blue fleabane is a scarce plant about Winchester, but in some unknown manner it has found its way to the friendly seclusion of the Close wall, and there it has flourished happily for many years. Far rarer, however, than the blue fleabane is the purple *Linaria* (*L. purpurea, L.*), so rare indeed that it has not acquired an English name, for its true home is on the mountains of Hungary. It is a tall and stately plant, with a long slender spike of purple flowers, and so conspicuous when standing on the top of a wall that it cannot fail to arrest the attention. And on the top of the Close wall it flourishes, out of harm's way, some eighteen to twenty feet above the roadway, and makes a fine show in late summer-time. How or when it got there is unknown. It is not recorded for any other locality in Hampshire, or indeed in the adjacent counties; but on the summit of the lofty monastic walls which enclose the north-west corner of the old Benedictine monastery it has been observed for many years. It is beyond question the most distinguished denizen of our ancient walls, and corresponds to the rare *Senecio* which graces the walls of Oxford, to the wall-rocket of Southampton, the wild pink of Beaulieu, the *Sedum* of Portchester, the little *Holosteum* of Norwich and Bury St Edmunds, the "London rocket" which, after the Great Fire, covered the blackened ruins. Our purple *Linaria* is now spreading to other walls in Winchester, and even appears as a weed in the Close gardens.

Ferns do not flourish in Hampshire as they do in the moister climate of the west of England, but a few interesting species may be seen on our walls. On the ruins of the Norman chapter-house the polypody fern is abundant ; indeed, in company with the handsome red spur-valerian, it covers the wide coping which protects the western front. Often in summer-time the plant appears to wither and almost to disappear ; but with the first rains of autumn the masonry is again green with the beautiful pinnatifid fronds. So with Thurburn's Chantry at College. The stone roof is covered with the polypody fern. On the walls of the Close, and on those of College and St Cross, the attractive little wall-rue is comparatively common, and in several places the rarer maidenhair-spleenwort may be seen. On one secluded line of masonry, hidden away from public observation, it has taken possession of the wall and flourishes as happily as in the damper atmosphere of Devon or Cornwall. We should not expect to find in Hampshire, at least in any abundance, the scaly ceterach, which sometimes covers the stone walls in the west ; but several solitary plants, known only to a few individuals, grace the walls of Winchester and manage to maintain a difficult existence.

The pellitory-of-the-wall (*Parietaria officinalis, L.*), as its name indicates alike in Latin and in English, is so called because of its characteristic habit of clothing with its shaggy foliage old walls and structures. In its purely native surroundings in prehistoric times, before buildings were erected by human agency, the species doubtless flourished on rocks and cliffs ; and in such a position I have noticed it at the entrance to the Tilly-Whim caves, near Swanage, in Dorsetshire. Needless

to say, it abounds at Winchester, where, in the Close, at College, and on the ruins of Wolvesey :

> "The mouldering walls are seen
> Hung with pellitory green."

Its specific name, *officinalis*, reveals the connection of the plant with herbalism. In mediæval times it was held to be of wonderful virtue in cases of "stone and gravell," and also for "old coughs and hot swellings in the throat." Other plants were sought after for their commercial value. One stretch of city wall is covered with a near relation of the wild mignonette, known as dyer's-weed. It is a tall plant, with long spikes of pale yellow-green flowers, and its English name, which goes back to the days of old Gerard and the early botanists, indicates the use made of it. It was prized for the sake of the fine yellow dye which it produces, and we may associate many a handsome bale of broadcloth or woollen stuff sold, it may be, at St Giles' Fair in mediæval times, with the striking species which now blossoms every summer on the city walls.

An old wall often offers a sanctuary to some scarce species which loves to nestle beneath its shadow and protection. In the year 1850 a writer speaks of the strange plant *Aristolochia*, or birthwort, as abundantly established "under the old garden wall of the hospital of St Cross, near Winchester." It is a very rare species, formerly in high repute for its supposed medicinal virtues, and when found is mostly in the neighbourhood of monastic ruins. At St Cross I have repeatedly searched for it in vain, although I have little doubt that it still exists in some hidden corner of the precincts. It was with much interest that one day last summer I

noticed beneath the shelter of the Dean's garden wall a fine plant of *Atropa Belladonna*, or the deadly nightshade. It is, of course, a rare species and as poisonous as it is rare, but it is to be found in some plenty on a weird and desolate warren some three miles from the Cathedral city. In what manner the plant found its way into Winchester I will not venture to declare; perhaps a bird carried the seed which, in the undisturbed seclusion of the Dean's garden, had germinated and flourished. There, at any rate, the plant stood, with its large, egg-shaped leaves and lurid purple flowers, an unwonted resident in the Cathedral Close.

But a still more interesting discovery awaited me in College meads. Beneath the shelter of an ancient wall, close to a branch of the River Itchen, which, after flowing through the Close and the warden's garden, makes its way past the playing-fields, I found a fine clump of the yellow balsam. I was naturally surprised, for I had never met with the species before in Hampshire. So taking a specimen home, I carefully examined it; without doubt it was *Impatiens noli-me-tangere, L.* Turning to the *Flora of Hampshire*, I found that it was unrecorded for the county, but in a footnote enclosed in square brackets there was a statement to the effect that in an old copy of Smith's *English Flora* there was to be seen the following entry in the handwriting of a "Miss Barter," doubtless the warden's daughter: "The Warden's garden, Winchester, quite wild, about 1835." Was it possible that the plant still existed as a weed in the warden's garden? If so, its presence beneath the college wall would be explained. Without delay I hastened to the sacred enclosure, and there, beside the flowing stream, were numbers of balsam plants, grow-

ing like weeds and apparently "quite wild." It was over eighty years since the plant had been recorded. During that long period it had "wasted its sweetness on the desert air." And there it was to-day, as thoroughly established as when the warden's daughter had made her brief entry in the copy of Smith's *Flora* in the year 1835. It was a thrilling discovery. The mystery of my clump of *Noli-me-tangere* was now explained.

CHAPTER V

COLLEGE WATERMEADS

THE River Itchen, immediately below Winchester, flows in three separate channels. There is the main river known as the Old Barge, which occupies the central position, and there are two side streams, both of them due to human agency, which may be called respectively the Canal and St Æthelwold's stream. The latter was diverted by Bishop Æthelwold in the tenth century so as to run through the precincts of St Swithin's Priory. It still flows from the site of the ancient "Nunna-minster" Mill through the Cathedral Close, and from thence runs underneath the bridge in College Street, past the Warden's Lodgings, beneath the old College water-mill, until at length it rejoins the main river in the meadows below. The Canal, too, is of very early origin. In a Saxon charter of the eleventh century mention is made of the "new river," but the present channel seems almost certainly to be the work of Bishop de Lucy, who received a charter from King John to levy toll on all goods entering the city "through the trench or canal which he had caused to be made."

The sweet, luscious water-meadows which lie between Canal on the east and St Æthelwold's stream on the west, and through which the Old Barge flows, are known as "Watermeads," and are full of interest and delight at all seasons of the year. The river abounds in

fish, and in spite of a clause in the College statutes which forbids the gentle art of angling, it cannot be doubted that numbers of Wykehamists have first learnt to throw a fly over its clear waters. It will be remembered by readers of Frank Buckland's biography that Watermeads was specially dear to the heart of the young naturalist when he was a boy at college. He knew, we are told, every bird in the hedges, every snake, shrew and water-rat in the banks, every eel and crayfish in the pleasant streams. He was the plague of the poor "Waterman's" life. "There's no keeping no fish nor nuffin' from him," the old keeper would say. On one occasion, however, "Waterman" very nearly caught his enemy, but, says Buckland, "I gave him a tremendous chase across the meads and through the various water-courses, and ultimately had to swim the river to get away from him. The sleeves of our college gowns acted as pockets, and I had two trout in one sleeve and one in the other. When swimming the river the fish in my sleeves came to life again, and I had a hard job to land myself and my fish."

The most striking feature in Watermeads, apart from its associations, is the fine willow-tree, of peculiarly attractive shape and appearance, which rises from the edge of the Old Barge in nearly the centre of the meadow. The main trunk of the tree has long lost its perpendicular position, and, like Shakespeare's willow

> "Grows aslant the brook,
> And shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream."

It is impossible not to notice it, so arresting is its appearance, with its comparatively low, wide-spreading branches, which present, as it were, a complete

miniature in itself, like the clump of beech-trees which crown the hill beyond. Indeed, a representation of the tree has found a place in two stained-glass windows in the diocese of Winchester. One may be seen in the historic church of St Thomas à Becket at Portsmouth, the advowson of which living belongs to College; and the other in Prior Silksteade's Chapel, in the south transept of the Cathedral. The latter window is dedicated to the memory of Izaak Walton, who passed his old age at Winchester, living with his daughter and son-in-law in the Cathedral Close, and who eventually died there during the great frost of 1683.[1] He must often have wandered down Watermeads, rod in hand, and doubtless caught many a fish in the swift stream "full of great stores of trout." Walton's association with Winchester could hardly have been more fittingly represented than in the painted window of the Cathedral, where we see the old fisherman resting under the willow-tree by the water-side, engaged in the peaceful occupation of reading, with this motto inscribed beneath: "Study to be quiet." Lower down the river, in the water-meadows which adjoin the ancient Hospital of St Cross, willow-trees are abundant. They line the banks of the Itchen and of the water-courses which flow from it. But nowhere will you see a specimen which for picturesque appearance can be compared with the willow of Watermeads. It stands alone, unique in grace and beauty, without a rival, and beyond compare.

The shelter of the willow-tree affords a happy retreat to many of the water-fowl that frequent the stream. The banks of the river, too, are clothed with a dense growth of reeds and tall grasses, and in summer-time of

[1] See chap. xxiii.

such coarse plants as comfrey and willow-herb and water-dock. Moreover, the ground around is swampy and difficult of approach, and birds are quick to discover a safe and secure refuge. In the Old Barge, near the willow-tree, dabchicks dive and splash about in the stream, and moorhens swim sedately among the water-weeds. One season a couple of coots made their appearance and took possession of a side-stream. They doubtless came from a sheet of water known as Fisher's Pond, some five miles away, where they congregate in large numbers. We could do without them in Watermeads, for they are pugnacious birds, and often drive away rarer and more interesting species. In another part of Watermeads there is a wild-ducks' nest, and a couple of snipe are breeding—at least the other evening I heard them "drumming," a peculiar sound which they make only in nesting-time. Numbers of reed-sparrows or black-headed buntings haunt the rank herbage that lines the river, and the chatter of the sedge-warbler is unceasing. All day long swallows and sand-martins dart over the surface of the water, and when the atmosphere is heavy the swifts will leave the vicinity of College Tower and join their confrères in the meadows below.

In winter-time Watermeads is not destitute of bird life. Morning and evening flights of wild-duck pass overhead to or from the higher reaches of the Itchen; a stately heron may, perchance, be seen standing in the shallower waterways, and a number of snipe feed in soft and swampy places. Every winter a pair of "grey wagtails," one of the most elegant and graceful of British birds, haunt St Æthelwold's stream, and it is not unlikely that a kingfisher will flash by. But the most

distinctive feature in winter-time is the number of sea-gulls which frequent the meadows. They arrive shortly before Michaelmas and depart at the end of March. In such numbers do they come as to give a special character to Watermeads. They belong almost entirely to the "black-headed" species, and very attractive do they appear, with their coral-coloured legs and beaks, as they splash about in the water, or rest on some picturesque wooden palings, or sail in companies overhead.

The rank growth of grass in Watermeads is unfriendly to the existence of rare and delicate species of wild flowers. Our meadows cannot, like those of Oxford, claim such a splendid denizen as the snake's head or fritillary; nor, as in the meads above the city, does the beautiful buckbean put forth its exquisite flowers. Still, in spring and early summer Watermeads presents a bright appearance, with its wide sheets of buttercups and marsh-marigolds and of pale lilac cuckoo-flowers. Later on, the banks of the river will be gay with yellow flags and purple comfrey, and with the still more showy blossoms of the North American *Mimulus* or monkey flower, which has completely established itself in many parts of Hampshire. Between College and St Cross its large yellow flowers reflect themselves in many places on the clear surface of the stream. A few choicer plants, too, may be found. In several of the waterways the interesting bladderwort flourishes, and the rarer form of it, known to botanists as *Utricularia neglecta, Lehm.* A few seasons ago a strange species suddenly appeared on a bank of mud, which had been thrown up out of the stream the previous winter. I noticed a patch of yellow blossoms which I did not recognise on the farther

side of the water, and on going round I saw a plant which was new to me. It proved to be *Nasturtium sylvestre*, Br., or the creeping cress, a scarce relative of the common watercress. It may seem strange how it contrived to get there. The species is very rare in Hampshire, and has only been found once or twice in the county. Doubtless, however, the seed had drifted down the stream from some spot in the upper reaches of the Itchen, and had eventually sunk in the mud opposite College Meads. How long it lay buried in the silt at the bottom of the water none can tell. At length the mud was cleared out and deposited along the bank of the river. And there, the following spring, the seed germinated and sprang up and blossomed abundantly, to the delight of more than one botanist to whom Watermeads is hallowed ground.

CHAPTER VI

"HILLS"

AMONG the most popular saints in England during the Middle Ages must be reckoned St Catherine of Alexandria. Indeed, of female saints she ranked in general esteem next to St Mary Magdalene. Martyred according to tradition, under the tyrant Maximin in the third century, her body was taken by angels and carried over the desert and the Red Sea and finally deposited in a marble sarcophagus on the summit of Mount Sinai. Hence the chapels dedicated to her honour were mostly erected on the tops of hills. In the south of England a number of such chapels existed, the remains of which may, in many cases, be seen unto this day. There were shrines, for example, to her memory on St Catherine's Hill, near Guildford, on Chale Down in the Isle of Wight, on St Catherine's Hill, to the north of Christchurch on the borders of the New Forest, and on the lofty height overlooking the sea above Abbotsbury in Dorsetshire.

There was also a chapel, all traces of which have now unfortunately disappeared, on the top of St Catherine's Hill at Winchester. This hill, or "hills," as it has been called by generations of college men, is a prominent and beautiful feature in the landscape. A circular chalk down, crowned with its clump of beech-trees, it rises some 300 feet, immediately above the valley of the

Itchen, and commands from its summit a fine prospect of Winchester, with its College and Cathedral, and directly below of the venerable Hospital of St Cross. The hill, too, is of interest, especially to field archæologists, inasmuch as it possesses one of the largest and most perfect examples of an early "camp" in Hampshire. The entrenchment has been well described as surrounding "like a crown" the top of the hill, the sides of which, especially towards the south and west, are nearly precipitous. In shape the camp is nearly round, the trenches following the line of the hill, and is calculated to embrace an area of twenty-three acres. Many have been the conjectures as to the age and origin of the earthworks which earlier writers were wont to associate with the Danes. But the works are far older than the time of the Danish invasion. They probably date back to a period of some three to four thousand years ago; and if the theory be true that, as civilisation advanced, the inhabitants of the hill-tops gradually migrated into the valleys below, it is probable that in standing within the circle of the ramparts on St Catherine's Hill we are standing on the original site of the oldest city in the south of England, if not in the entire country.

Passing to historic times, it is of interest to notice that possibly the earliest mention of "hills" is in connection with King Cnut. We learn from *The Winchester Annalist* that the great king gave "three hides of land called Hille" to the Old Minster, which until quite recently formed part of the Cathedral property. At what date the Chapel of St Catherine's was built upon its summit is unknown. It existed, however, as early as the thirteenth century, for in the year 1286 the

belfry is recorded to have been blown down. A little later, we learn from a chartulary of the Cathedral Priory, it was customary to pay to St Swithun's " all oblations coming from the chapell of St Katerine on her feast-day, as well by day as by night, from vespers on the Vigil of the feast to nightfall on the day after." In the monastic rolls there are frequent allusions to this yearly offering or oblation. Moreover the good brethren kept her festival, which occurred on 25th November, with becoming state and good cheer, for did not the hill on which the chapel stood belong to the monastery? It was fitting, therefore, as the Diet-rolls reveal, that a more generous fare, including wine for the chaplain and a choice entrée for the ministrants, should be provided on that day. The chapel, it appears, was suppressed by Cardinal Wolsey during his brief tenure of the see of Winchester, and its revenues sequestered for the benefit of his colleges at Ipswich and Oxford. The antiquary Leland, who visited Winchester a few years later, makes the following observation :—" Ther was a very fair chapelle of S. Catarine on an hill scant half a mile without Winchester town by south. This chapel was endowid with landes. Thomas Wolsey, cardinal, caused it to be suppressed, as I hard say." All traces of the " fair chapelle " have now disappeared, and its actual site can only be conjectured.

From early days *Mons Catharina* has been regarded as sacred ground by successive generations of Wykehamists, and many are the legends and customs associated with " Hills." One only need be mentioned. There is an " old traditional story," which can be traced back to the latter part of the seventeenth century, that a scholar, who for some flagrant offence was left at

college during the Whitsuntide vacation, endeavoured to beguile his solitude by cutting a maze in the turf on the top of "Hills," and by composing the Latin ode, *Dulce Domum*, but that he pined away, and eventually died beneath the "Domum tree" singing his celebrated song. The story is no doubt purely mythical; but the maze itself may be seen on St Catherine's Hill, and gives a yet additional interest to the sacred mount. For mazes are among the rarest of English antiquities. Comparatively common in the Middle Ages, there are very few now remaining. Two only exist in Hampshire, one on Breamore Down and this one on St Catherine's Hill. Unlike the Breamore miz-maze, ours is square, but both are constructed on the same general principle. There can be little reasonable doubt that mazes are ecclesiastical in origin, and I should feel inclined to associate the one on St Catherine's Down with acts of penance performed by mediæval pilgrims when visiting the ancient chapel which once crowned the hill. In connection with the happy memories of "Hills," which linger in the hearts of countless Wykehamists, it may not be amiss to recall the singularly appropriate lines of the poet Gray on the distant prospect of a not less celebrated school:

"Ah, happy hills! ah, pleasing shade!
Ah, fields belov'd in vain!
Where once my careless childhood stray'd,
A stranger yet to pain!
I feel the gales that from ye blow
A momentary bliss bestow,
As waving fresh their gladsome wing,
My weary soul they seem to soothe,
And, redolent of joy and youth,
To breathe a second spring."

To others besides Wykehamists " Hills " is a spot of pleasant associations. Rising from the water-meadows of the Itchen valley, within a mile of the Cathedral, it affords an easy walk to the citizens of Winchester. Crowned with its clump of beech-trees it is a conspicuous landmark in the district. The trees, of course, have been planted by human hands, as is the case with similar clumps on the chalk hills of Sussex and Wilts and Dorset. The present clump is said to have been planted by a company of the Gloucestershire Militia, under the direction of Lord Botecourt, the colonel of the regiment, when encamped on the hill towards the close of the eighteenth century. The appearance of the trees would seem to corroborate the truth of the tradition. But that an earlier clump stood upon the summit of the hill is certain. There is preserved at New College, Oxford, a manuscript of the *Life of Wykeham*, written by Warden Chandler about the year 1462. In this manuscript there is a drawing of the college, in which St Catherine's Hill is shown with a noble clump of trees standing on the top. It is clear, therefore, that the " three hides of land called Hille " was crowned with trees some centuries before the handiwork of the Gloucestershire Militia.

The present clump, which has succeeded that of Warden Chandler's illustration, consists of some forty to fifty beech-trees and a few Scotch firs. The latter are in a state of pitiable decay. Several are quite dead, and their bare trunks, entirely destitute of bark, stand out bleached and naked against the tender green foliage of the beeches. On the south side of the clump, beneath the shelter of the trees, runs a low, straggling thicket of brushwood, consisting mainly of cotoneaster

bushes, with a few thorns and elders. How the cotone-aster shrubs came to be present is unknown, and they look strangely out of place on the top of the chalk down. Numbers of wild flowers star the short turf in spring and summer-time, and several choice and interesting species may be met with. The month of June is the best time to see the hill in its full glory. The milkwort is then in bloom, with its dense masses of ultramarine and purple and white flowers. But the yellow blossoms of the *Leguminosæ* predominate. The little bird's-foot trefoil, with golden flowers passing into orange and even red, is abundant, and the paler yellow blossoms of the lady's-fingers. The much rarer tufted horseshoe vetch, so called from the shape of the seed-vessels, which resemble clusters of twisted talons or bunches of little corkscrews, is also plentiful, and lends distinction to the flora of the hill. Another choice plant is the *spiræa*, or dropwort, a near relation of the meadow-sweet, with its elegantly cut foliage and pink-and-white petals, which is not uncommon on the western slope of the down; while here and there a rare *Senecio* (*S. campestris*), or ragwort, will be seen, looking, unlike most of its tribe, dignified and even striking with its simple stem and umbel of yellow flowers. Several species of orchis grace the hill by their presence. Early in the season the dwarf or green-winged orchis is in flower; in June the beautiful bee-orchis is plentiful, and has even spread to the railway embankment below the hill; with July the curious frog-orchis will put forth its spike of green flowers striped with dull red; and later on the lady's-tresses, with its fragrant white blossoms, will in some seasons be abundant.

For hundreds of years these plants have flourished

on St Catherine's Hill. They were doubtless there in the dim ages of the past when a Celtic tribe occupied the situation ; in the days when King Cnut made over the hill to the good monks of St Swithun ; when pilgrims toiled up the mount to pay their vows at the shrine of St Catherine and perhaps to do penance amid the perplexities of the maze. There they have blossomed, season after season, since William of Wykeham founded his famous school, and generation after generation of college men have gone " on Hills." And there, it may be, in spite of the multiplication of military camps around Winchester, they will continue to flourish for long years yet to come ; and the swifts will return every May and shriek around the hill-top as of yore, and the peewits utter their wailing cry from the fallows below, while overhead the kestrel will hover with outstretched wings, in search of the little field-mice whose burrows run in every direction beneath the turf of the famous hill.

CHAPTER VII

ON SELBORNE COMMON

NEVER does Selborne Common look more attractive than when the trees are painted in their autumn tints. I was wandering lately over the enchanted ground, so dear to Gilbert White, when the beeches in the Hanger were in all their glory and the thorns were loaded with scarlet fruit. "If," wrote the great naturalist in his journal, under 26th October 1783, "a masterly landscape painter was to take our hanging woods in their autumnal colours, persons unacquainted with the country would object to the strength and deepness of the tints and would pronounce that they were heightened and shaded beyond nature." "Wonderful, indeed, and lovely" I thought the colouring as I made my way along the pathways, through the bracken, and tried to conjure up in my mind the many associations of Selborne Common with the life and interests of the immortal naturalist.

The down, or sheepwalk, known as Selborne Common is, as White said, "a pleasing park-like spot, jutting out on the verge of the hill country, where it begins to break down into the plains." It runs from the top of Selborne Hanger to the village of Newton Valence, about a mile distant, and is as quiet and undisturbed as it was in the eighteenth century. Rabbits scuttle about in every direction, and a number of pheasants—wild

birds, not reared in a coop by the gamekeeper—have made their home in the "park-like" solitude. The horizon is bounded by "the vast range of mountains, called the Sussex Downs"; the waters of Wolmer Pond may be seen gleaming in the distance; while in the more immediate vicinity "the noble chalk promontory" of Nore Hill stands out boldly in the landscape.

To reach the Common or sheepwalk from the village of Selborne it is necessary to climb the Hanger, either by the famous zigzag or by the pathway still known as the Bostal. It is a stiff climb, for the top of the Hanger is 300 feet above the level of the village street. The walk was a favourite one with Gilbert White. The zigzag path was partly of his making, and the so-called wishing-stone at the top of it was placed there by himself. He loved in spring-time to watch the beech-trees bursting into leaf, and to note their change of colour as the autumn advanced. All the year round he was constantly climbing "the beech-grown hill" to "the straw-clad cell" or hermitage which he had erected on the top, or to wander about the Common which is constantly alluded to in his historic letters. Many choice plants he found blooming there, which he duly entered in his notebook. On the Hanger he notices the spurge-laurel, the hellebore, the autumn gentian, the bird's-nest orchis, the yellow *monotropa*, all of which species continue to blossom there. On the Common, among the brushwood, the *Daphne mezereum* grew, a very rare and striking species, with fragrant pink flowers, which appear early in the spring before the leaves are out. There too the attractive orchis known as ladies'-tresses puts forth its spiral spikes of pure white,

sweet-scented flowers in the late summer-time, when the hips and haws begin to ripen.

Many of White's observations are associated with his beloved Common. There the nightjars were to be seen of a summer's evening and the stone-curlew could be heard calling at night. On one occasion, on 13th October 1778, he notes that "near 40 ravens have been playing about all day." Now he is making experiments on the Common to discover if possible the laws which regulated the strange phenomenon of echoes. Now he is investigating a curious humming in the air "to be heard distinctly the whole Common through," from the top of the Hanger to the avenue gate of Newton Vicarage. Or he is interested in the subject of dew-ponds, "one in particular on our sheep-down, 300 feet above my house, which, though never above three feet deep in the middle, has never yet been known to fail."

It was by way of the Common too that Gilbert White was wont to visit his particular friend, Richard Yalden, vicar of Newton Valence. The roads were bad in those days, and for six months in the year were practically impassable for a carriage. Indeed in one year it is noted as a rare circumstance that on 15th March "a four-wheel'd post-chaise was brought to ye door at this early time of year." People were dependent for society on their near neighbours, and in this respect White was fortunate. A close intimacy existed between himself and the vicar of Selborne and Mr Yalden, of Newton Valence. The friends are constantly meeting, "drinking tea" or dining at each other's houses. Mr Yalden was, moreover, connected with White by marriage.

The house in which Yalden lived is still standing, from the windows of which a most enchanting view of the surrounding country, including Nore Hill, is obtained. It is approached from the side of the Common by an avenue of venerable Scotch firs, which adds much to its picturesque appearance. Unlike White's house at Selborne, it occupies high ground, and in dry seasons there is sometimes a difficulty about water. The only source of supply is a vast rain-water tank, which, as we learn from Gilbert White's letters, one winter gave out, and water had to be fetched from the south side of Nore Hill. That Richard Yalden, like his friend the Selborne naturalist, took an interest in country pursuits is evident. When preaching not long since in his beautiful old church—a small Early English building, exquisitely cared for in all respects—I lighted on a manuscript-diary and weather chart, in which the good vicar, after the manner of Gilbert White, entered daily the state of the weather. Sometimes more interesting entries are made. Now Mr Yalden "drinks tea with Mr White at the Wakes," now he dines there. Once or twice an observation on natural history is entered. He notes the hearing of a chiffchaff on Selborne Common, and the cry of a stone-curlew. Like Gilbert White, too, he is a painstaking parson and cares for his people. We meet with a list of persons residing at Newton, at Hawkley and at Greatham respectively to whom he has given copies of a book on the Sacrament that they may understand the rite the better.

It was a great grief to Gilbert White when, in 1784, the health of Mr Yalden began to fail, and many were the walks across Selborne Common to inquire after his

friend. He was, we learn, "ill, very ill," in the month of June, and his general condition was "very bad"; but as the summer advanced he mended and talked much of going out partridge-shooting over the glebe in September. But the following winter was a long and trying one. The great frost occurred when at Selborne White lost all his "laurustines, bays, ilexes, arbutuses, cypresses, and even his Portugal laurels and his fine sloping laurel hedge were scorched up." The cold proved too much for the ailing vicar, who passed away early in 1785, and was buried within his church at Newton Valence, where a tablet to his memory may be seen. It was some consolation to our naturalist that his nephew, Edmund White, succeeded Mr Yalden at the vicarage, where a barometer adjusted by Gilbert White is still carefully preserved.

On the verge of the Common, overlooking the village of Selborne, a break in the beech-trees, now in the splendour of their autumn colouring, reveals the house where White lived, lying some three hundred feet below, with the church just beyond it. The church tower is mantled with virginia creeper, which shows a bright patch of crimson on the landscape. Eight years after the death of Mr Yalden, White followed his friend to the grave. But holding "the custom of burying within the body of the church" to be an improper one, he was buried, in accordance with the instructions of his will, "in the churchyard in as plain and private a way as possible, without any pall-bearers or parade." "Six honest day labouring men" carried him to his grave on the north side of the chancel, to whom he left "the sum of ten shillings each for their trouble." Very peaceful did the village appear as I gazed upon

it from the Common. The calm autumnal weather seemed to be an emblem of the naturalist's career. He had spent nearly the whole of his long life at Selborne "in gladness and singleness of heart." And the stillness and beauty of the scene reflected the serenity of his life.

CHAPTER VIII

THE VERGE OF THE FOREST

IN olden times the New Forest extended from Southampton Water on the east to the River Avon on the west, and from the shore of the Solent to the borders of Wiltshire. Its area is now somewhat restricted, but it still covers an extent of nearly a hundred thousand acres. It may be that the strip of land adjacent to Southampton Water was always more or less under cultivation, and therefore outside the strict boundaries of the Forest. At any rate there is at Fawley, near to Calshot Castle, an ancient church showing fine Norman features, and another at Dibden, overlooking Southampton Water, possessing a Norman font ; and it seems likely that these churches served the spiritual needs of the population that occupied this strip of territory from Norman times.

Very attractive to the naturalist is this long, narrow stretch of partly cultivated land lying between the shore of Southampton Water and the trees and moorland of the Forest. The student of English literature will doubtless call to mind that it was this well-wooded district as viewed from the town of Southampton, across the "narrow sea" or "swelling flood," that inspired the fine hymn of the good Nonconformist, Isaac Watts, in the year 1709, "There is a land of pure delight." From a botanical and ornithological standpoint its

interest is difficult to exaggerate. This is, no doubt, partly due to the varied nature of its soil and scenery. The shore is not only the haunt of many sea-fowl, but it supports a flora of its own. The copses which come down to the water's edge are alive in spring and summer-time with numbers of our smaller birds. The bogs creeping between the plantations of larch and fir are rich in moorland plants, while the banks of the deep lanes which run between the farms and homesteads are clothed with a profusion of ferns and wild flowers.

If it be true, as a mediæval saint used to say, "*Ubi aves, ibi angeli*," then the churchyard of Dibden must be haunted by legions of angels. It is a veritable paradise of birds. A quieter and more secluded spot could not well be imagined. Approached by a deep and hollow lane, it is surrounded by forest trees. Save for the ancient manor house immediately to the north of it, the church stands in solitary isolation, overlooking Southampton Water. As I rested beneath an aged oak which stands in the middle of the churchyard a green woodpecker alighted on the tree and, careless of my presence, began to run up the massive trunk. At that moment a bird's note, which could only be that of the red-backed shrike or butcher-bird, arrested my attention. Almost at once I caught sight of three speckled fledgelings, with the characteristic dark band across their eyes, sitting close together on the low branch of an elm-tree some twenty yards distant. It was most interesting watching through a pair of field-glasses the parent butcher-birds feeding their young with grubs and beetles. It was the time of fledgelings, and Dibden churchyard had clearly provided shelter for a large number of nests. Several young robins and green-

finches continued to call from a hawthorn bush, and a fly-catcher never ceased its activities from the top of a broken tombstone.

Towards sundown I wandered past a copse illuminated with wild roses and foxgloves to the open moorland beyond, where my presence gravely disturbed several pairs of redshanks. Their slightly built nests were evidently hidden somewhere in the desolate swamps. With wild cries and gesticulations they threw themselves about in the evening air, hoping to draw away the intruder of their solitudes. Their shrill notes of alarm disturbed the peewits, or green plovers, whose doleful wail, like unto the cry of a lost soul, added to the weirdness of the situation. After a while a company of wild-duck, with outstretched necks and regulated flight, passed overhead in the direction of Beaulieu Abbey. As the twilight deepened the " whir " of the nightjar or goat-sucker became more audible, and now and again the strange bird would be seen making a rapid flight into the air in quest of some moth or insect, and again dropping down into the seclusion of the gorse and heather.

But if the verge of the Forest is full of interest to the lover of birds, it is no less so to the botanist. The shore of Southampton Water is the home of many choice species. It is the chief locality in England for the many-spiked cord-grass, or *Spartina alterniflora*, which found its way over from America at the beginning of the last century, and has now completely established itself. It is a stout and withal a useful grass. Many sheds and outhouses and even cottages in the neighbourhood of Hythe and Dibden may be seen thatched with it instead of straw. All along the shore characteristic seaside

species may be found. The sea-beet grows in abundance, and the sea-campion, the sea-milkwort, scurvy grass and the frosted orache ; while on the shingly spit where stands Calshot Castle, built by Henry VIII. with stones from Netley and lead from Beaulieu Abbey, some rarer plants flourish. The Portland-spurge grows there, its only habitat in the county of Hants, and in vast abundance the wild seakale. Indeed so plentiful is the seakale that in former years the coastguards and fishermen were wont to blanch the young shoots by covering them up with sand and shingle and to send them to the Southampton market. And, curious to relate, abundant as the plant is at Calshot Spit, it will be seen nowhere else, except sporadically, and that very seldom, along the Hampshire shore.

In summer-time the moorland is most attractive. The curious, carnivorous sundews, both the long-leaved and the round-leaved species, are abundant, and in places their rarer relative, the *Drosera anglica*, Huds. may be found. The lovely little marsh St John's wort and the equally lovely creeping-pimpernel are everywhere, while the upright yellow spikes of the bog asphodel appear like candles or torches over the swamps and the tiny white flags of the cotton-grass wave gently in the breeze. This is where the sphagnum moss is found, gathered in large quantities during the war to make compresses and bandages for our wounded soldiers. Scattered all over the moorland the solitary purple flowers of the strangely named " meadow-thistle " will be seen, and spikes of the spotted orchis ; while here and there the marsh club-moss, or lycopodium, may be noticed creeping over the black soil. But the chief glory of Dibden Bottom is the Calathian violet, or

marsh gentian (*Gentiana Pneumonanthe*, L.). Its large, bell-shaped, deep blue flowers, striped with green, are among the most beautiful and showy blossoms of the British flora. It is a rare plant too, though often abundant where it occurs. It flowers in August, and such a splendid pageant does it present as to suggest a Swiss pasture rather than an English moor. As an illustration of its attractive beauty it may be recalled that a few years since an Oxford scholar, whose classical attainments are only equalled by his love of botany, actually purchased a stretch of moorland because it possessed a colony of the marsh gentian.

In a leafy glade not far from Dibden Bottom an encampment of gipsies may mostly be seen. It must be allowed that these nomads add considerably to the picturesqueness of the Forest. A cluster of brown, tattered tents, an iron kettle suspended over a wood fire, the smoke of which curls up leisurely among the trees, the rough ponies and donkeys tethered hard by, the half-naked children, the strapping women moving about with the air and dignity of queens, the tall, loafing men, with their brightly coloured neck-cloths and well-seasoned pipes, reclining carelessly on the ground—present a picture of peaceful happiness such as town-dwellers might well envy. But life for the gipsies is not what it was in former times. Since the deer in the Forest have been destroyed their lot is a far harder one. They have now to be contented with a stray fowl for dinner, or a young rabbit, or it may be with a hedgehog baked whole in a coat of clay, and with such provisions as a village shop can supply.

A Forest stream, red with iron deposits, runs past the gipsy encampment and gives a sense of coolness on the

hottest day in summer. The banks of the stream are clothed with ferns of the tenderest green—both the male and the female fern, the long, ribbon-like fronds of the hart's-tongue, the hard-fern and the sweet-scented mountain-fern. Tall foxgloves are everywhere, and present a fine contrast with their splendid spikes of purple flowers to the soft, delicate green of the *filices*. Here, as elsewhere on the verge of the Forest, the tapping of the woodpecker may be heard, and perhaps the jarring notes of a jay as the handsome bird leaves the shelter of a holly bush.

CHAPTER IX

THE NEW FOREST FLORA

IT is not surprising that the flora of the New Forest is a rich one. The large extent of its area, much of it untouched and unenclosed since the days of William the Conqueror, the diversity of its natural conditions—the shore of the Solent and of Southampton Water, the extensive woodlands, the wide tracts of open heath, the streams and water-courses, the spacious bogs and swamps—afford ample and suitable shelter to the various orders of British plants.

The geological formations of the Forest somewhat diminish, it is true, its wealth of wild flowers in comparison with the adjoining districts. There is no chalk in the Forest, and consequently the chalk flora, so abundant in parts of Hampshire and in Wiltshire and Dorset, is almost entirely wanting. Although the yew appears to be indigenous, yet most of the chalk-loving species are absent. The wild *Clematis* or traveller's joy is seldom seen ; the bee-orchis, so characteristic of the chalk downs, is unknown ; so are the fly, the rare green-man (*Aceras*) and the dwarf orchids. We might perhaps have expected to find in some of the hollows of the Forest the dwale or deadly nightshade, but this, too, is wanting, and we shall seek in vain for such attractive woodland species as the herb-paris and the fragrant *mezereum.*

Still other choice plants more than counterbalance these omissions. On the crumbling walls of Beaulieu Abbey, founded by the worst of English kings in consequence of a terrifying dream, the wild hyssop and the pink, *Dianthus plumarius*, L., the parent of our garden species, still flourish, as when in mediæval times the Cistercian monks moved about their sacred precincts. In the deeper glades of the Forest the torch-like spikes of the foxglove and the wild purple columbine and the exquisite bastard-balm light up the shadowy gloom. The bogs are fragrant with the sweet Dutch myrtle and illuminated with the golden asphodel. On the road-sides the turf is brightened with the star-like blossoms of the humble tormentil and "the little speedwell's darling blue." Along the shallow margin of Sowley Pond, and elsewhere in the Forest, the rare frogs'-bit opens its white crumpled petals, and the stately spearwort rears its noble head.

But besides the large number of species which we should naturally expect to find in so extensive and diversified a district, the forest is also "the home of some of England's greatest rarities." Some of these have only been discovered within recent years, since about the middle of the last century, but others were known to "the fathers of English botany."

One of the most striking and interesting of these rarities is the blue cowslip, or narrow-leaved lungwort, known to botanists as *Pulmonaria officinalis*, L. It was discovered by one Mr John Goodyer, who "on May 25, anno 1620, saw it flouring in a wood by Holbury house in the New Forrest in Hantshire." This is the earliest record of the plant, and occurs in the second edition of Gerard's *Herball*, published in 1633.

The finding of this beautiful and attractive species clearly made a deep impression on the minds of the early botanists, for one after another—Thomas Johnson, Will Cole, Christopher Merrett, John Ray—dwell on Goodyer's discovery. The plant is unknown in England except in the New Forest and in the Isle of Wight, and very sparingly in one or two other localities. In the neighbourhood of Beaulieu Abbey, especially in the woods and copses that skirt the river, it is common, and must often in early spring have attracted the notice of the good monks, who doubtless made use of it in medicinal preparations. It is curious to notice how the flower changes colour in the course of its career. In bud it is of a reddish hue ; as the petals open they become violet, then ultramarine blue, and at length fade slowly into a dull purple. The plant has been variously named, but the early botanists mostly call it the bugloss-cowslip or the long-leaved sage of Jerusalem. How the name " Jerusalem " came to be connected with the plant is unknown, but it evidently had some sacred associations, and the children of the New Forest call it to this day " Joseph and Mary." Its other name, lungwort (*Pulmonaria*), had reference, of course, to its use in herbalism, the spotted leaves of the plant being, according to the accepted " doctrine of signatures," a clear indication of its purpose in the divine economy.

Another rare Forest plant is the stately *Gladiolus illyricus*, Koch, only discovered in the year 1856, and found nowhere else in England. Its tall and graceful scapes of purple flowers shoot up among the thick bracken in several glades of the Forest about the middle of July. Authorities differ as to the claims of the

species to be regarded as a native plant. It is certainly strange that so arresting and conspicuous a flower should have escaped notice up to the middle of the last century, and since in one locality it is found in close proximity to rhododendrons, it has been suggested by an eminent authority that "all the spots might be connected with planted trees or shrubs." It is, however, scattered here and there over a wide area of the Forest, often in entirely natural surroundings; and, moreover, a few specimens of the plant were discovered some years ago, in similar situations, on Lake Common in the Isle of Wight.

But whatever doubts may exist as to the indigenous nature of *Gladiolus*, none rests on the marsh *Ludwigia*, one of the rarest of British plants, and as humble and retiring as the former is conspicuous and grand. It was first found in England by our friend, Mr Goodyer, growing along the course of a tiny stream on "the Moor at Petersfield," where it continued to exist until the year 1848, when owing to drainage operations it entirely disappeared. Five years, however, before this unfortunate catastrophe, the plant was discovered in some swampy ground between Brockenhurst and Lyndhurst. Since then it has been found in other parts of the Forest, now its only habitat in England. It is very difficult to detect, especially in dry seasons, and I must confess that I have never succeeded in finding it, but, to quote the words of a more fortunate botanist, "it is assuredly a beautiful though not a showy plant; the lucid, transparent green of its leaves, harmoniously blending with suffusions of the richest olive brown and bright red veined with crimson, can hardly find a parallel in any other indigenous species of our land."

Close to the swamp where the *Ludwigia* dwelt an exceedingly rare and local grass, the European cut-grass (*Leersia ovyzoides*, Sw.), was found by Dr Bromfield, the distinguished botanist, in 1849. He afterwards detected it all along the Boldre river, for nearly three miles above and below Brockenhurst, where it still flourishes.

But by far the most interesting rarity in the New Forest is the truly beautiful orchid *Spiranthes æstivalis*, Rich., or summer lady's-tresses. It was first discovered in July, 1840, on a tract of sphagnous bog between Lyndhurst and Christchurch. The honour of the discovery seems to belong to a Mr Joseph Janson, who sent specimens of the plant to the British Museum. The species was then new to England, although it has since been found in Wyre Forest, in the county of Worcester. In appearance, both as regards the spiral arrangement of its white flowers and in general habit, the plant proclaims its relationship to the autumnal lady's-tresses, so plentiful in places on the Hampshire Downs, but it is larger and taller. It is satisfactory to know that this rare species of British orchid still flourishes in the very swamp where Mr Janson first found it in the summer of 1840. I myself saw it there a few seasons ago, and the occasion was one not lightly to be forgotten. The swamp is a spacious one, where sweet gale, sundew, asphodel, cotton-grass and other species grow in abundance. After wading about for some little while in the soft and spongy bog I spied ahead of me a slender spike of pure white blossoms rising from a cushion of green sphagnous moss. Surely it was the long-sought treasure. Splashing towards the spot, I eagerly examined the lovely plant. It was

without doubt *Spiranthes æstivalis*. A further search revealed a number of isolated plants scattered here and there throughout the swamp. My happiness was in proportion to my good fortune. It was a notable day in my botanical experience.

The existence of these five plants alone—the blue cowslip, the *Gladiolus*, the *Ludwigia*, the cut-grass and the *Spiranthes*—would abundantly justify the assertion that the New Forest is " the home of some of England's greatest rarities." And these species by no means exhaust the wealth of the district. We have already noticed others which would give distinction to any neighbourhood. There is perhaps no area of equal size in Great Britain which yields in its shady glades, its open heathlands, its grassy rides and borders of plantations, its wide stretches of wet turf and marshy swamp, so rich a harvest of choice and attractive species.

CHAPTER X

ST ALDHELM'S HEAD

THERE are few finer stretches of coast-line, at least in the south of England, than that which lies between Peverel Point and St Aldhelm's Head, in the Isle of Purbeck. The splendid cliffs, of varying hues and colours, descend for the most part sheer into the sea, forming a mighty bastion of rock, on the ledges and in the crevices of which the sea-fowl breed in multitudes. From the remote ages of antiquity these lonely cliffs have been their breeding-places, and there, too, many rare plants find a secure and congenial home, forming here and there veritable rock-gardens on the face of the perpendicular walls.

The downs above are scarred and scored with numbers of little stone quarries. Some of them were worked as far back as the time of the Romans. Indeed, they have given to the Isle of Purbeck a justly deserved reputation. William Camden, who died in the year 1623, tells us in his *Britannia* that "the Isle of Purbeck, which is full of heath and forests, well stocked with fallow deer and stags, has under ground, here and there, veins of marble and many sorts of good stone, from which (as tradition informs us) the Cathedral Church of Salisbury was supply'd; and large quantities thereof are carried to London, with great advantage of the inhabitants." And not Salisbury Cathedral only, but Winchester

Cathedral likewise, and Romsey Abbey, and the Temple Church in London, and many another stately shrine. Indeed, as Sir Frederick Treves truly says: "There can hardly be a cathedral in the south of England, or a self-respecting church, castle, or manor house, that owes not some beauty in mason's work to 'Purbeck marble' shipped from Swanage." Many, too, of the mediæval marble effigies, which add so much to the beauty and interest of our churches, were executed in marble from the Isle of Purbeck. So with the coarser strata. The stone was used abundantly in the rebuilding of London after the fire of 1666, especially in the erection of St Paul's Cathedral, and until quite recent years was largely employed in paving streets and courtyards.

In olden times the lonely line of cliffs between Durlston Head and St Aldhelm's was the haunt of many a rare bird now, alas! extinct, or almost so, in the south of England. Among these must be reckoned the raven, the chough and the peregrine falcon. Forty years ago the raven was not an uncommon bird in the Isle of Purbeck. It built regularly on the white chalk cliffs above Studland and on the magnificent headland of St Aldhelm's. For centuries, too, it had bred at Corfe Castle. In an old manuscript diary, under date 1638, when the stronghold stood in all its glory, we find the following entry: "Raven bred in Corfe Castell at Christmas and did kill yonge lambs to feed 5 younge ones w'h he had; W. Brown ye keeper did kill yose 5 younge Ravenes." As late as 1857 the ravens continued to haunt the ruins, in which year they brought off their young in the "ivy-tower," and some seasons later they nested in safety at St Aldhelm's Head.

Indeed, until quite lately their hoarse croak might be heard, above the sound of the waves, as they tumbled about after their manner in the air, or made their way along the coast-line between Lulworth and Tilly Whim.

Everyone will remember Shakespeare's famous lines in *King Lear* on the white chalk cliffs of Dover, where

> "Half-way down
> Hangs one that gathers samphire";

and where

> "The choughs that wing the midway air
> Show scarce so gross as beetles."

The red-legged chough, common enough in Shakespeare's time, is now almost extinct in England. Up till the middle of the last century it was fairly plentiful on the Purbeck coast, where it used to breed at St Aldhelm's Head. But, like the raven, it has fallen a victim to persecution; and the attractive sight of a company of choughs sailing along Seacombe Cliffs will now be sought in vain. But if the chough has disappeared, its near relative, the jackdaw, has enormously increased, and multitudes of these birds now frequent the Purbeck coast. Indeed it is not unlikely that the presence of the daw in such numbers has helped towards the extermination of its rarer relation by taking possession of the latter's nesting-places along the cliffs. Among the hawks the kestrel maintains its position in Purbeck Isle. It breeds in many places along the coast, and most seasons there is a nest in the ruins of Corfe Castle. Formerly the peregrine falcon was not uncommon, and one or more of these noble birds might always be seen along the cliffs. Now, as in the Isle of Wight, it has

become very rare, and its ancient eyrie at Durlston Head is untenanted.

But if civilisation has been hostile to such species as the raven, the chough and the peregrine, it has in no wise interfered with the vast number of sea-fowl which frequent the coast every spring. Except on the perpendicular chalk cliffs of Freshwater, there is perhaps no spot in the south of England where sea-fowl breed in such numbers as on the oolite cliffs of Purbeck. The puffins are usually the first to appear, coming in from the sea, almost to a day, during the last week in March. They are quickly followed by the razor-bills and guillemots. In greater numbers still the herring-gulls congregate on the cliffs, occupying every available ledge and cranny. A wonderful sight it is to pass in a little boat beneath the long line of perpendicular rocks, and to watch the wild-fowl—gulls and puffins and razor-bills and guillemots, and it may be a colony of cormorants or a pair of glossy green-black shags—as they sit in myriads on the ledges, or break forth from the face of the cliff with loud and frightened cries.

As would not unnaturally be expected, a number of rare and interesting plants flourish out of harm's way on the magnificent rocks which guard the coast of Purbeck. Formerly the wild sea-cabbage, the parent of our cultivated garden varieties, was plentiful, and may still be seen in several places ; but for some unknown reason it has become scarcer on the Dorset coast, as in many other parts of England. A relative of the sea-cabbage, known as black-mustard, is, however, abundant, and is the characteristic plant on the sloping cliffs of Durlston Bay, where, with teazle and burdock, with ox-tongue and hound's-tongue, with wood-sage and

perfoliate yellow-wort, it makes a fine show in spring and summer-time. But perhaps the choicest spot along the coast, where sea-plants can be seen in their most attractive surroundings, is in the immediate vicinity of the famous Tilly Whim caves. The caves themselves are disused quarries, and apart from their interest as old workings, and as the haunt of smugglers in after-times, they appeal to the botanist in several respects. More than one clump of the increasingly rare and charming fern, *Asplenium marinum*, L., or the sea spleenwort, continues to flourish in inaccessible positions; and the pellitory-of-the-wall, common enough on old ruins and castles, may here be seen in its natural surroundings, growing abundantly on its native rocks. On the perpendicular cliffs hard by other striking plants blossom. The samphire (*Crithmum maritimum*, L.) grows in profusion, and in days when the succulent plant was accounted a delicacy was doubtless gathered by the hardy fishermen and sent up in barrels to London. The business—"horrid trade," as Shakespeare terms it, because of the danger attendant upon gathering the plant—was a fairly lucrative one as late as the middle of the last century, when the plant fetched four or five shillings a bushel. With the samphire on the cliffs of Tilly Whim also grows the rare *Inula crithmoides*, L., or golden samphire, which, while bearing in part the same English name, is yet of an entirely different order of British plants. It has succulent leaves, it is true, and has sometimes been used as a substitute for the true samphire, but it belongs to the order of Composite plants, and is a stately and upright species, with heads of golden-yellow flowers. It sometimes thrives, as in my old parish of Porchester, on the seashore, but at

Tilly Whim it is a rock-plant, and very striking does it appear growing in clusters on the face of the perpendicular cliffs. Other interesting species keep the samphires company. Large cushions of the beautiful rose-coloured thrift and of the white sea-campion maintain a hold on the rocks, together with dense masses of the sea-beet, or wild spinach, as the fishermen call it, and lusty plants clothed with long hairs of the sea-carrot. Dwarf specimens, due, doubtless, to the exposed situation, of the ploughman's spikenard appear very attractive on the rocks, and a white-flowered variety of the sea sand-spurry and a scarce form of the exquisite sea-lavender which can hardly fail to attract attention.

On the lonely height known as St Aldhelm's Head stands, 450 feet above the sea, a little Norman chapel, dedicated to the famous Bishop of Sherborne, and dating back to the twelfth century. It is a low, square structure, built entirely of stone and lighted only by one small, narrow window-slit in the east wall. Up to the time of the Reformation the tiny chapel—it only measures 32 feet square—was served by a chaplain, who also attended to the beacon light on the roof. As one stands by the Norman doorway it is impossible not to be conscious of the romance and sublimity of the situation. A magnificent prospect of the Dorset coast presents itself from the Anvil Lighthouse on the east to the Isle of Portland in the dim distance on the west. No trees interrupt the vision. There is only sky and sea and downland, and a sense of infinity. And here, in springtime, there comes up a rare orchid which loves to flourish on the oolite formation of the Isle of Purbeck. It is the spider-orchis, and every May it puts forth its curious blooms, as it doubtless did before the chapel of

St Aldhelm was erected. It will be sought for in vain elsewhere in Dorset, or in the adjoining counties, but here, in the vicinity of the Norman chapel, and among the Purbeck marble quarries towards Durlston Head, it has made its home. When the spider-orchis is past its prime, it is succeeded by the bee-orchis and the pyramidal orchis, and when these two are gone, and the summer is drawing to a close, and the wheatears are collecting on the downs, then the delicate *Spiranthes autumnalis*, Rich., known as lady's-tresses, will make its appearance. Last autumn, as I stood on the turf beside St Aldhelm's Chapel, it was scattered over the downs, as if to cheer with its exquisite spiral blossoms the departing summer.

CHAPTER XI

SHINGLE VEGETATION OF THE SUFFOLK SHORE

THE most remarkable feature of the Suffolk coast which stretches for some fifty miles from Landguard Point at the mouth of the Orwell to the denes of Lowestoft is the vast accumulation of shingle which in places guards the shore. Not only is there the famous "shelf" running between Aldeburgh and the North Vere, which for twelve miles or more separates the river from the sea, and which, except for a coastguard station and the Orford lighthouse, is destitute of any habitation, but at Baudsey Ferry, at Shingle Street, where the black-boarded, red-tiled fishermen's cottages are entirely surrounded by shingle, at Walberswick, at Easton and Benacre, considerable stretches of shingle may be seen. Here and there, it is true, the shingle gives way to sand-dunes; and at Felixstowe, Dunwich, Southwold and again between Kessingland and Lowestoft some low-lying sandy cliffs—the haunt of myriads of sand-martins in summer-time—are met with; yet on the whole the shingle may fairly be regarded as the characteristic feature of the Suffolk shore.

It would seem to be almost impossible that any vegetation could manage to exist on the bare surface of the shingle beach; and yet the shingle, like the sand-dunes and the meal-marshes, has a distinct flora of its own. It is not a rich flora, if richness be reckoned according

to the number of species, but it can boast of several plants of unusual interest and beauty. Indeed, one of the most striking plants in the British flora loves to put forth its delicate blossoms on the naked shingle. There is perhaps no more beautiful wild flower than the yellow horned-poppy, with its hoary foliage and large, delicate petals and " long huskes or cods, crooked like an horne or cornet," which may be found more or less along the Suffolk shore. I was struck with its abundance in certain places. At Slaughden Quay—sacred to the memory of George Crabbe—where a small cluster of dilapidated cottages occupy the pebble beach, the plant was making a brave show. Several of the fishermen's houses are in ruins and, half buried in the shingle, bore witness to the fury of the storms ; but on the very crest of the naked ridge the flowers were blooming in profusion. In still more lavish abundance did I find the yellow horned-poppy on the wide stretch of sand and shingle between Benacre Broad and the sea. At one spot, some forty yards or more in length, there was a thick jungle of this beautiful plant, while close by were several fine patches of the pale purple sea-rocket in full flower on the bare stones.

Another choice species of shingle vegetation is the rare and handsome sea-pea (*L. maritimus*, Big.). It is a local plant, to be found only in a few counties of Great Britain, where its chief habitat is the Chesil Beach, in Dorset, and on the shingle of the Suffolk coast. The fact of its flourishing on the barren " beach, where nether grew grasse, nor any earth was ever seen," excited much curiosity in early days and when, at a time of grievous dearth in the reign of Queen Mary, a great quantity of this " peason was discovered by the

seaside all of hard stone and pibble, called in those parts a shelfe, lying betweene the townes of Orford and Aldborough, whereof the poore people gathered above an hundred quarters," we learn from Stowe's Chronicle that all men counted it for a miracle. The " miracle " has not yet exhausted itself. On the dreary " shelfe " of shingle towards Orford lighthouse the sea-pease or peason, as the old writers call it, still flourishes as in the sixteenth century, and in many places along the shore the dull grey surface of the pebble beach is relieved by bright patches of this beautiful plant. I have also met with it at Felixstowe, at Shingle Street, at Aldeburgh, where Crabbe gathered specimens for his herbarium, and on several spots between Dunwich and Walberswick.

This last stretch of seashore produces several interesting species of shingle vegetation. A wide belt of pebbles, in places mingled with sand, separates the sea from the Westwood marshes. On this exposed ridge, some four miles in length, the haunt of the ringed plover and the lesser tern, a large number of plants flourish. The yellow horned-poppy is again strongly in evidence, though not in such abundance as on Benacre denes. With it will be seen tall, red spikes of rumex, large compact cushions of the pink sea-milkwort, and spreading tangles of sea-beet. The dainty sea-campion is plentiful in places, especially towards Walberswick, and all along the beach are scattered plants of the uncommon clammy *Senecio* (*S. viscosus*, L.), an unattractive species but interesting on account of its rarity, and one characteristic of the Suffolk shore. Where sand mixes with the shingle the beautiful sea-holly is plentiful, with yellow sedum, and rest-harrow, and

hare's-foot trefoil, and various kinds of maritime grasses. In several places the great yellow ragwort was very conspicuous, and I also noticed plants of the rose-coloured willow-herb and of the exquisite sky-blue chicory. Strange to say, there was one clump of the true samphire (*Crithmum maritimum*, L.) growing on the shingle. This aromatic plant, which yields the well-known condiment, is usually found on sea-cliffs, as at Dover and at Freshwater in the Isle of Wight, but in the only two places where it is to be seen in Suffolk it flourishes on the bare pebbly beach. So with the reflexed stonecrop, usually associated with rocks, or ancient ruins, as at Walberswick and Covehithe, but in several places along the coast it carpets the shingle with its bright and handsome yellow flowers.

An old writer speaks of the seakale or colewort as "growing naturally upon the baych and brims of the sea, where there is no earth to be seen, but sand and rolling pibble stones," and another mentions that "very good Coleworts come up yearly out of the stony heaps" along the Suffolk shore. The plant has now become very rare in Suffolk, and the county Flora even states that it is "believed to be extinct," but I found several plants between Dunwich and Walsberwick a few summers ago. The sea-spurge (*E. Paralias*, L.) may also be seen springing up out of the shingle in luxuriant profusion. It sometimes even assumes the size of a small bush, and I counted as many as thirty stems rising from a single root. In the olden times the family of spurge or "Tithymale" played an important part in domestic medicine, and the "strongest kinde of Tithymale and of greatest force is," we learn, "that of the sea." In confirmation whereof John Gerard the

herbalist relates his personal experience. "Some," he says, "write by report of others, that it enflameth exceedingly, but my selfe speak by experience; for walking along the sea coast at Lee in Essex, with a Gentleman called Mr Rich, dwelling in the same towne, I tooke but one drop of it into my mouth; which neverthelesse did so inflame and swell in my throte that I hardly escaped with my life. And in like case was the Gentleman, which caused us to take our horses, and poste for our lives unto the next farme house to drinke some milke to quench the extremitie of our heat, which then ceased."

In former years other and rarer plants were occasionally to be found on the pebbles of the shore, and among the extinct plants of Great Britain must be included one or two members of our scanty shingle vegetation. A creeping vetch (*V. lævigata*, Sm.), with solitary pale blue flowers, a near relative to the yellow *Vicia lutea*, L., which I found blooming plentifully among the pebbles at Landguard Point, formerly grew on the long belt of shingle between Weymouth and Abbotsbury, but the plant has been lost for many years. The same is perhaps true of *Diotis maritima*, Cass., the sea cotton-seed or cudweed. At the beginning of the last century George Crabbe found it on the long beach of stones near the Orford lighthouse. Formerly this choice plant, "growing much about a handful high, with leaves thicke upon the stalkes, very white, soft, and woolly," was to be seen on various parts of the coast. Ray found it in several places on the coast of Wales; it was recorded from the Isle of Wight, and Gerard saw it "growing at a place called Merezey, six miles from Colchester, neere unto the sea side." It has

now disappeared from all these localities and must, it is feared, be included among our extinct, or nearly extinct, species. Still, with such striking plants as the sea-poppy, the seakale or colewort, the sea-spurge, and the sea-pea and, it may be added, the sea-holly, which, while more at home on the sand-dunes, does not disdain the pebbles of the beach, the members of our shingle flora need not fear comparison with species that favour more sheltered situations.

CHAPTER XII

SUFFOLK SAND-DUNES

VAST stretches of shingle constitute, as we have seen, the main feature of the Suffolk shore, but in places the shingle gives way to sand-dunes, which are often the only barrier between the marshes and the sea. Between Thorpe and Sizewell Gap, associated, as Fitz-Gerald tells us, with tales of smuggling and heroism in the brave days of old, and onwards past Sluice to the crumbling cliffs of Dunwich, and again at Covehithe and Benacre, lines of low sandhills fringed with hoary marram-grass, and bright here and there with the beautiful striped flowers of the sea-convolvulus, protect the lowlands from the tide.

Among the characteristic plants of the Suffolk sand-dunes the marram-grass and the creeping *Carex arenaria*, L., occupy, as under similar conditions elsewhere, a conspicuous position. Indeed, if it were not for these useful species, with their long subterranean rhizomes, which bind the shifting sands together, the dunes would never withstand the violence of the winds and waves. Beneath the kindly shelter of the marram-grass other and more interesting species contrive to maintain a flourishing existence. As one wanders along the Suffolk shore from Sluice to the little hamlet of Thorpe, some two miles north of Aldeburgh, where the shelf of shingle begins, a good idea of the flora of the sand-dunes

may be obtained. All along the way numbers of the lesser tern or sea-swallow will be heard crying overhead or seen descending with a sudden dip into the waves; little companies of ringed plover flit with rapid flight along the shore; wheatears and shore-pipits are busy among the bents and marram-grass, while the wailing cry of the peewit is heard from the level of the reclaimed marshes.

The Minsmere cliffs end abruptly some two miles south of Dunwich and are immediately succeeded by a stretch of sand-dunes which separate the shore from the marshes known as Minsmere Level—a wide reach of reclaimed land, intersected by many dykes and relieved from monotony by the picturesque ruins of Leiston Old Abbey, a conspicuous feature in the landscape. On these dunes the beautiful sea-holly, with its glaucous hue and leaves variegated with milk-white veins, is sparingly scattered about, and with the *Eryngium*, protected by the presence of the marram-grass, masses of the purple sea-rocket, the yellow bedstraw, the prickly saltwort and the pink-flowered sea-milkwort. Just beyond the dilapidated hamlet of Sluice, where the waters of the Minsmere river find their way into the sea through an artificial aqueduct, the sea-convolvulus will be seen in abundance. It is one of the most attractive species of the seaside flora and lends a grace and distinction to the dreariest shore. All along the dunes the rest-harrow is plentiful, not the prickly species of agricultural lands which gained for the plant its English name, but a creeping variety without spines, and with larger and more handsome pink flowers.

Beyond Sizewell the creeping rest-harrow is the

characteristic plant, and with it in considerable abundance the sheep's-scabious. A few plants of the pale green sea-spurge, a species generally more at home in Suffolk on the shingle than on the sand, will also be seen, and several interesting grasses. Just before reaching the little fishing hamlet of Thorpe two striking species, of an entirely different character, are fairly plentiful. A rare form, perhaps a distinct species, of the common centaury known as *Erythræa littoralis*, Fries, or the dwarf tufted centaury, a lowly plant, much branched, with bright pink flowers crowded in a dense cyme, found only in one or two localities on the Suffolk coast, makes a beautiful show on the sandy dunes; while just at the end of the warren, where the ground begins to rise, there is a goodly colony of the very rare sea-buckthorn (*Hippophaë rhamnoides*, L.). This is a fine willow-like shrub, some seven or eight feet in height, with shining silvery leaves, and bearing in the autumn small orange berries. Twice only have I found this handsome species in a native locality, once on the wide warren between Deal and Sandwich, and here on the Suffolk sand-dunes, not far from Aldeburgh. Here, too, the lovely little burnet rose (*Rosa spinosissima*, L.), with solitary white flowers and black, globular berries, is plentiful. This is almost certainly the traditional Dunwich rose of monastic legend:

> "With snow-like blossom,
> Soft, pure, and white as is the cygnet's bosom;
> That decks the stern and sterile cliff, and throws
> O'er its rough brow new beauty where it grows."

The spiny sea-holly or *Eryngo* is beyond question one of the most beautiful plants, not only of the sand-dunes,

but of the British flora, and unfortunately it is becoming scarcer on the Suffolk coast. It may still be seen, as we have noticed, on the Minsmere dunes, and at Walberswick and at Landguard Point it is fairly plentiful, but it is not so common as it used to be, and in places, as along the shore near Lowestoft, it has almost entirely disappeared. In former days it was much sought after for its medicinal properties, and until quite recently its roots were candied as a sweetmeat in Essex and Suffolk. Sir Thomas Browne, the famous Norwich antiquary, speaks of the "eryngo diggers" in the seventeenth century; and Gerard, in his *Herbal*, gives minute directions as to the proper way of "conditing" the roots. The root, we learn, "is of the bignesse of a man's finger, so very long as that it cannot be all plucked up but very seldome, set here and there with knots, and of taste sweet and pleasant." The directions for conditing are too lengthy for full quotation. Suffice it to say that a syrup must be prepared consisting of a "pinte of cleer water, a pound of sugar, the white of an egge, a saucer full of rose-water, a spoone full of cinnamon water, and a grain of muske," into which the roots "pilled clean as ye pil parsneps" must be placed, "then set them on the fire in a faire broad pan untill they be very hot, but let them not boile at all," after which "remoove them with a wooden slice on to some royall papers, which you must put into a stove or hot-house to harden." Thus condited, "the roots are exceeding good to be given to old and aged people that are consumed and withered with age and other sorts of people."

The wide sandy warren lying between Benacre Broad and the sea, and protected from the high tides by an undulating ridge of sandhills, presents a somewhat

barren and desolate appearance. In places the surface is thickly matted with pale, sickly looking mosses and lichens, and dotted here and there with stunted elder-trees and dwarf clumps of thick-set gorse bushes. Faded carpets of yellow *Sedum* or stonecrop cover the sandy waste in other parts, relieved by lusty plants of dock and nettle and yellow ragwort. On the Benacre dunes the sea-holly seems to have disappeared; not a single plant could I find between the Covehithe cliffs and Kessingland. Neither does the pink and white sea-convolvulus creep among the stems of the marram-grass and sand-sedge. But one plant I had not met with elsewhere on the Suffolk shore was to be seen at Benacre. The Danish scurvy-grass, a near relative of the common scurvy-grass which usually frequents muddy shores, was growing freely on the sand-dunes. The species is an unattractive one, but it has interesting associations, as its name indicates, from its medicinal use in mediæval times.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SALT MARSHES OF SUFFOLK

THE county of Suffolk cannot claim to possess such extensive stretches of salt marsh as may be met with on the coast of Norfolk, in the neighbourhood of Wells and Hunstanton. But here and there, on the borders of the Orwell and the Deben, at Orford and Aldeburgh, and near the mouth of the Blyth at Walberswick, tracts of marshland may be seen, bearing its own distinctive flora, the haunt of gulls and curlews, and possessing that strange fascination associated with these "moorlands of the sea." "A more desolate region can scarce be conceived," wrote a master of description with reference to these salt marshes, "and yet it is not without its beauty. In summer the thrift mantles the marshes with shot satin, passing through all gradations of tint, from maiden's-blush to lily-white. Thereafter a purple glow steals over the waste, as the sea-lavender bursts into flower, and simultaneously every creek and pool is royally fringed with sea-aster. A little later the glasswort, that shot up green and transparent as emerald glass in the early spring, turns to every tinge of carmine."

The salt marshes near Aldeburgh are frequently alluded to by George Crabbe in his poems, and more than once he gives a graphic description of their somewhat dreary scenery. In the "Letter" of *The Borough*,

which treats of Peter Grimes, who "made fishing his employ," we read of

> "The bounding marsh-bank and the blighted tree;
> The water only when the tides were high;
> When low, the mud half-cover'd and half-dry;
> The sun-burnt tar that blisters on the planks,
> And bank-side stakes in their uneven ranks;
> Heaps of entangled weeds that slowly float
> As the tide rolls by the impeded boat."

In another poem, entitled *The Lovers' Journey*, which is, in fact, a page of autobiography, he paints what seemed to him the dull and desolate surroundings of the mert at Aldeburgh. "Here," he cries—and the passage as penned by a botanist calls special attention—

> "Here a grave Flora scarcely deigns to bloom;
> The few dull flowers that o'er the place are spread
> Partake the nature of their fenny bed;
> Here on its wiry stem, in rigid bloom,
> Grows the salt lavender that lacks perfume;
> Here the dwarf sallows creep, the septfoil harsh,
> And the soft slimy mallow of the marsh.
> Birds, save a wat'ry tribe, the district shun,
> Nor chirp among the reeds where bitter waters run."

The gloomy picture was doubtless to some extent due to the state of despondency through which at the time of writing he was passing, for in another passage he reminds us "that all that grows has grace," that "bog and marsh and fen are only poor to undiscerning men." He dwells, indeed, with affection on the flora of the salt marshes. He notes the *Butomus* or flowering-rush as growing "plentifully in the mere" between Thorpe and Aldeburgh, together with the purple loosestrife

and the great spearwort. On the surrounding salt marsh he notices "fat-leaved, pale-flowering scurvy-grass," sea-rushes and sea-aster, the saltwort both simple and shrubby, and the jointed-glasswort or marsh-samphire. In fact Crabbe left an almost complete list of the most interesting plants to be found in the marshes around Aldeburgh, most of which may still be seen in their old localities.

But both from a botanical and a picturesque standpoint the salt marshes near Walberswick are the most attractive on the Suffolk coast. These are of no great extent, but they possess a flora of exceptional interest, amid surroundings the reverse of desolate. An old-world ferry crosses the Blyth at Walberswick, where along the bank of the river black-boarded, red-tiled huts and shanties, in which the fishermen store their tackle, lie clustered together, while all kinds of lumber and wreckage are scattered about in picturesque confusion. Between the village roadway and the sea stretches an expanse of marshland more or less inundated at every high tide. Deep dykes, "with banks of sloping mud," intersect the marsh in various directions, spanned in places by wooden bridges of curious workmanship. A bank of shingle lies between the marsh and the sea, on which flourish many choice plants, such as the sea-spurge, the sea-holly, the yellow horned-poppy and the exceedingly rare sea-pea. The marsh itself supports a varied flora, including the majority of species usually met with in such localities. The orache, or crab-grass, as it is locally called, is the commonest plant, which covers the mud flats and banks of the creeks with its silvery foliage and spikes of inconspicuous flowers. With the "crab-grass" will be seen

the sea-beet in abundance, the leaves of which often turn red as summer advances, the sea-spurrey, the sea-milkwort and the sea-plantain, with conspicuous yellow anthers. In the shelter of the dilapidated shanties the beautiful silvery *Artemisia* or sea-wormwood grows in luxuriant profusion. Along the oozy borders of the dykes the jointed-glasswort abounds, called in Suffolk the marsh-samphire, and the plant, like the real samphire, is often gathered for purposes of pickling. On the drier portions of the marsh the surface is starred here and there with the exquisite pink blossoms of the dwarf centaury, a rare and choice variety of the common type.

But still rarer species flourish on the Walberswick marshes. Among them may be mentioned the shrubby sea-blite, the exquisite little sea-heath, the slender hare's-ear and a very scarce sea-purslane. The shrubby sea-blite (*Suæda fruticosa*, Forsk.) is a near relative of the common sea-blite of our salt marshes, from which it may be at once distinguished by its larger size, its woody stem, and by the fact of its flowers possessing three styles instead of two. It is an unattractive shrub, with dark, succulent, cylindrical leaves, and except for its rarity would hardly merit attention. It is found only at Portland, in the county of Dorset, and in East Anglia, where in several places it is fairly plentiful. In Essex it may be seen at Maldon, St Osyth and Mersea Island; on the meal marshes of Norfolk, near Wells, it is sparingly scattered over a wide area; but in Suffolk it is distinctly rare. Although in former years it has been recorded for Aldeburgh and Southwold, I have never found it in either locality; but on the Walberswick marshes one little

thicket of it remains. The fishermen will tell you that the plant owes its origin to some seeds being washed ashore from the wreck of a ship, but it is undoubtedly indigenous in East Anglia. Near the thicket of *Suæda fruticosa* a few plants of the slender hare's-ear (*Bupleurum tenuissimum*, L.) may, by diligent searching, be found. It is, as its name indicates, a small, unassuming species, with grass-like leaves and minute yellowish flowers, but of special interest on account of its rarity. Crabbe found it on the banks of the river at Hollesley and by the salt ditches in the Aldeburgh marshes, where, it may be, it still flourishes, and perhaps nowhere else on the Suffolk coast except at Walberswick. The stalked sea-purslane has also been recorded from the same localities, but I have repeatedly searched for it in vain. If, however, the existence of the rare purslane be doubtful, this is not the case with the equally scarce and far more beautiful sea-heath, or *Frankenia lævis*, L. This lovely little plant, with wiry stems and small rose-coloured flowers, trails over the muddy surface of the marsh, giving sometimes, from the abundance of its blossoms, a rosy tint to the ground over which it creeps. If the plant be closely examined it will be seen that the leaves are rolled back at the margins, giving them the appearance of being linear instead of oblong. It is found in Suffolk only on the salt marshes near Bawdsey Ferry, and at Walberswick, where it has increased of late years.

The most beautiful plant in the flora of the salt marshes is beyond question the sea-lavender. It comes into flower late in summer, when the crab-grass is beginning to turn yellow, and the sea-aster or starwort is fringing the pools, and it often covers with sheets of its

beautiful mauve flowers wide stretches of marshland. The sea-lavender—both the common species and the rarer kind with more spreading panicles—is plentiful near the ferry at Walberswick and also in the salt marshes beside the heronry. Sitting one evening in August on the rising ground beneath the great Scotch firs, in which earlier in the season some forty pairs of herons had made their nests, the sea-lavender on the mud-flats below presented a striking appearance. The entire level was aglow with a pale purple sheen of colour. The surroundings, too, added charm to the picture. A stately heron was standing motionless in the shallow water at the edge of the tidal river, flocks of sea-gulls and ringed plover were feeding on the mud left bare by the receding tide ; in the distance the trees of Henham Park bounded the landscape ; to the left, beyond a dense jungle of reed-grass and rushes, rose the magnificent church tower of Blythburgh ; while immediately below, on the stretch of salting lying between the fir-trees and the river, gleamed in the soft glow of the setting sun the beautiful expanse of sea-lavender.

CHAPTER XIV

MINSMERE LEVEL

BETWEEN the cluster of dilapidated cottages known as the Sluice, on the Suffolk coast, and the inland hamlet of East Bridge there lie some two miles of reclaimed marshland known as Minsmere Level.

A straight canal, called the " new cut," bounded on either side by a sea-wall, runs right through the centre of it, from the bridge which gives to the hamlet its name to the sluice or aqueduct on the shore. Three drainage windmills with picturesque brown tops and sails are conspicuous objects in the landscape, and the striking ruins of an old monastic chapel. For in mediæval days an abbey stood on the tongue of land slightly raised above the level of the swamp. It was founded in the middle of the twelfth century by one Ranulph de Glanvile for a small community of Præmonstratensian monks. The situation, owing to the noxious exhalations of the marsh, doubtless proved very unhealthy, and some two hundred years later a larger abbey was erected about a mile and a half distant on higher ground. It is probable, however, that until the Reformation a few monks continued to occupy the Minsmere Monastery, and we read of one John Green, abbot of the new establishment at Leiston, resigning his position in order to become a hermit " at the chapel

of St Mary in the old monastery by the sea." It is the remains of this chapel, standing on the desolate marsh, that form so arresting a feature in the dreary landscape. The roof of the building and the stone mullions of the windows have entirely disappeared, but the outside walls remain, built of pebbles from the beach, interspersed here and there with a few Roman tiles. On the crumbling walls of the chapel, which only measures some 35 feet by 18, various plants have established themselves, such as mallow and mustard and pearlwort and fescue-grasses. A single specimen of the characteristic Suffolk species, *Sisymbrium Sophia*, L., or flixweed, was also flourishing on the broken masonry. From the shelter of the ruin it was possible to watch unobserved the wild life of the marshes. A large flock of swallows, old birds and young, had congregated, as they will do before migration, on the fallow outside, every now and then rising in a body and settling again. A couple of kestrel-hawks were hovering over the marshes on the look-out for field mice, which abound on the drier portions of the level, several herons rose with laboured flight from the reed-fringed dykes, a solitary curlew flew over the chapel just above the summit of the walls, while all around, in keeping with the weird and desolate surroundings, rose the mournful wail of the green plover.

When the good Leiston Abbot was living as an anchorite in the chapel by the sea the marshes were as yet untouched by man. Kingsley's description of Whittlesea Mere before the draining of the fens might almost equally well be applied to the old Minsmere marshes, which must have been a famous resort of wild-fowl in the olden times. Even in the

days of George Crabbe it was no uncommon thing to hear

> "the loud bittern, from the bullrush home,
> Give from the salt-ditch side the bellowing boom."

But many of the rarer birds have forsaken their ancient haunts, although in hard winters a goodly number of interesting species are met with. And the reclaiming of the marshes has also affected the flora of the district. Many choice plants have vanished, or have become exceedingly rare. The splendid *Osmunda* or Royal fern, once common in the marshes, is now seldom seen. The marsh ragwort and the marsh *Cineraria* have become very scarce, while the great marsh sow-thistle is all but extinct. So too with the choice two-leaved *Liparis* or fen-orchis. It formerly grew in many of the Suffolk bogs and marshes, but has now very nearly disappeared. But though the Minsmere marshes have been drained, and cattle and horses now feed on a broad expanse of pasture-land, yet along the dykes which intersect the Level many interesting plants may be met with. The flora of these dykes or ditches is, of course, entirely different from that of the adjacent sand-dunes and shingle which separate the reclaimed marshes from the shore, or of the meal marshes which often border the sea. It is a flora of its own, consisting of aquatic and bog plants, of pondweeds, sedges and rushes, and including several species of ferns which have now become extremely rare. And this flora, if lacking the peculiar fascination of that of the seashore, is not without interest and distinction. Indeed there is much pleasure in wandering along these straight dykes fringed with reeds and tall grasses, the haunt of ducks and moorhens, of dabchicks and reed-warblers.

The plants that most usually line the dykes, sometimes with a dense jungle of herbage, are the common reed and the branched bur-reed or *Sparganium*. The sword-like leaves of this latter species are very conspicuous along the ditches, mingled with the broad leaves, which often turn reddish in the autumn, of the great water-dock. In places, too, the reed-mace, commonly but erroneously called the bull-rush, is abundant, and now and then the far more beautiful and elegant lesser reed-mace. Gerard calls the reed-mace by its mediæval name of "cat's-taile," and mentions various uses to which the down of the conspicuous "mace or torch" was wont to be put. "The soft downe," we learn, "stamped with Swines grease wel washed healeth burnes or scalds with fire or water." Moreover, "this downe in some places of the Isle of Ely and the Low countries adioyning thereto is gathered and well sold to make mattresses thereof for plow-men and poore people." This custom no longer exists in East Anglia, but the handsome plant is often cut and sold for decorative purposes. The water plantain, with tall flower-stems and loose panicles of small pale lilac blossoms, is another frequent species along the ditches, which are often choked with the rank growth of water-hemlock, of which "the whole plant is of a naughty smell."

The somewhat sombre colouring of the dykes is often relieved by vivid patches of colour when the great hairy willow-herb puts forth its large rose-coloured flowers, or the splendid purple loosestrife, perhaps the "long-purples" of Shakespeare, fringes the "fleets" with its flowers. Nor must the more select flowering-rush (*Butomus umbellatus*, L.) be forgotten, one of the most

handsome of our bog-loving species, with its umbel of rose-red flowers clustered at the top of a round stalk, which rises several feet above the surface of the water. This fine plant is not to be found on Minsmere Level, though it abounds in a marsh not many miles distant, but all along the side of the dyke which runs nearest to the ruined chapel the rare and exquisite marsh-mallow, with soft, velvety leaves and pale purplish flowers, is abundant.

Where the dykes are not overgrown with rank herbage, choicer and more delicate species may sometimes be seen flowering in the open water. In such places, it is true, unattractive pondweeds and starworts often manage to obtain a monopoly, and not infrequently the entire surface of the water is covered with a uniform scum of unwholesome-looking duckweed, or, as the old herbalists called it, " ducks' meat." Old Gerard in his *Herbal* has a quaint woodcut representing a moat beneath a fortress covered with the " very little round leaves of the bigness of Lentils " of this plant, on which several ducks are feeding. But in the more open dykes of the Minsmere Level, where the " ducks' meat " has not gained the mastery, several interesting species may be seen. Along one reach of water the lesser water-plantain is established, a rare and delicate plant with rather large flowers of a pale pink colour and with a spot of yellow in the centre. The bladder-wort, too, is not uncommon, and here and there along the dark stretch of water the deep yellow flowers stand up with striking effect. In other ditches the orbicular leaves of the uncommon and elegant frog-bit entirely cover the surface of the water, and when the plant is in flower the dainty white blossoms are very attractive.

The name "frogge-bit" goes back to mediæval times and enshrines the belief that frogs fed upon the plant, while its scientific designation of *Hydrocharis* has reference to its elegant appearance. And it would indeed be difficult to exaggerate the beauty of this little water plant, with its floating leaves deep green above and of a reddish tint beneath, and white flowers of three crumpled petals and clusters of barren yellow stamens.

In spite of the artificial dykes which intersect the Level, and the almost constant working of the three windmills to draw off the stagnant water, the marsh in places is very swampy and of little use as pasture-land. In these boggy parts of Minsmere Level, amid the tussocks of coarse grass and rushes, snipes and redshanks make their nests every spring, as in the old days of Abbot John. Now, as then, the "drumming" of snipes is a frequent sound on the desolate marshes during the breeding season, when the beautiful buck-bean is in flower. Later on, as the summer advances, the very rare grass-of-Parnassus, with its delicately veined, cream-coloured blossoms, will grace the swamp with its presence, as it doubtless has done since the far-off days of the fifteenth century, when the good hermit meditated in "the chapel of St Mary in the old monastery by the sea."

CHAPTER XV

FLORA OF THE RAILWAY

FOR many years past I have kept a watchful eye on the flora of our railways. For, strange as it may seem, railroads afford a special attraction to numbers of British plants. The most casual observer must have noticed the extraordinary show sometimes made by wild flowers along a stretch of railway embankment. In places the slopes will be a sheet of gold with the blossom of the furze or of the common broom. Or perhaps the rose-bay or flowering willow-herb has taken possession of a cutting, and the banks will be a blaze of colour.

And indeed, when one comes to think about it, it is not strange that it should be so. A railway embankment sloping to the south or west, under the genial influence of the sunshine and the rain, is just such a situation as many wild flowers delight in. The slopes, moreover, are seldom interfered with, and plants can fulfil their destiny of producing seed in peace. In places where deep cuttings have been made, the almost perpendicular sides will speedily attract some wall-loving species. Often, again, especially in the eastern counties, a dyke or ditch will accompany the railway line for leagues together, and here aquatic plants can flourish undisturbed. Even the ballast between the iron rails on the permanent way will afford shelter to

many a lowly annual; while not infrequently the railroad is the highway along which species transfer themselves from one part of the country to another.

A most interesting example of the modern method of travelling among plants may be recorded. For many years past there has flourished on the walls of Oxford a very rare member of the ragwort or groundsel tribe, which rejoices in the not altogether attractive name of *Senecio squalidus*, L. It is believed to have originally escaped from the Botanic Gardens, where it was cultivated by Bobart the Elder, the first Keeper of the Gardens, about the middle of the seventeenth century. Until the introduction of railways *S. squalidus*, L., seems to have been satisfied with occupying the ancient walls and buildings of the university town, which came to be recognised as its adopted home, and from which it received its English name of the Oxford ragwort. But when the Great Western Railway system was inaugurated it began to grow restless and to migrate beyond the limits of Oxford. Along the permanent way it extended itself, until in course of time it reached Reading, where it occupied the railway banks and waste places. Later on the Great Western Railway line was extended by way of Newbury to Eastleigh, and once again *S. squalidus*, L., began to travel southwards. At length it arrived at Winchester, and last summer several plants might be seen blooming happily beside the permanent way at the Great Western Railway Station.

A newly made embankment, even if composed of chalk, will be quickly covered with vegetation. How the seeds are conveyed to the virgin soil in such amaz-

ing numbers may be a matter of scientific speculation, but the fact remains beyond dispute. When the Meon Valley Railway in Hampshire was being made, some twenty-five years ago, the long, curving line of low embankment which ran not far from the course of the river between Wickham and Warnford was almost immediately occupied with a dense growth of yellow charlock. Long before the line was ready for traffic the course of the railway all down the green valley could be traced by a winding ribbon of shining gold. After the first season or two other plants entered into competition, and the yellow line of charlock became less and less conspicuous. And now a vast number of different species occupy the embankment.

Sometimes, indeed, a railway embankment is a veritable flower garden at the right season. I know such a garden on the Great Western Railway line between Winchester and Shawford, where the line runs below the shelter of St Catherine's Hill. The embankment slopes towards the west, looking over the canal in the direction of the ancient hospital of St Cross. Often in summer-time do I visit this garden. It is probably at its best in the early days of June, when the slope is literally ablaze with colour. Yellow predominates, not only because of the splendid patches of *Lotus corniculatus*, L., or bird's-foot trefoil, but also because of the abundance of the much rarer and far more local tufted horseshoe vetch. At first sight the plant might be mistaken for the common lotus, but the curious structure of the seed vessels, which resemble a series of horseshoes united by their extremities, at once distinguishes it. With the deep yellow of the *leguminosæ* is mingled a

variety of other hues. Tall red spikes of rumex shoot up from among tangled masses of the white bedstraw ; poppies are abundant ; the beautiful calcareous milkwort, with its variegated flowers of blue and purple and white, is in full blossom ; the " speedwell's darling blue " mingles with the bright yellow flowers of the common rock-rose ; and from the shelter of the elder bushes, now covered with snow-white blossoms, the purple " foxglove spire " is conspicuous. The dog-roses, great bushes of which flourish on the embankment, are in all their glory, and along the slope will be seen here and there the pale yellow flowers of wild mignonette and the pink and white blossoms of the rare and lovely dropwort, first cousin to the common meadowsweet. But what renders the wild garden so remarkable is the profusion of the bee-orchis on the slope. The seed had, of course, come from the downs above, where, however, the species cannot be regarded as plentiful. But here on the railway embankment it was abundant. The soil and situation were clearly to its liking—although what constitutes favourable conditions to the species few botanists would venture to declare—for tall specimens, carrying five or six exquisite bee-flowers, might be gathered by the handful. Within a few yards of the line a fine colony of the exceedingly rare musk-orchis, *Herminium Monorchis*, Br., had established itself. I failed, however, much to my disappointment, to find a single specimen actually on the railway.

In very hot seasons the flora of the railway suffers severely. During the dry summer of 1911 I remember travelling from London to Walberswick, on the Suffolk coast. All along the line were unsightly black patches,

where the herbage had caught fire from the sparks of the engine. Hardly a flower was to be seen—here and there a few scarlet poppies, or some yellow ragwort, or a plant or two of the common milfoil or the purple knapweed. The grass and the tenderer species were all scorched up, and the slopes of the cuttings and embankments were brown and bare. Only on changing trains at Halesworth for the little Southwold line did I notice on a steep embankment a thriving cluster of the wild fennel, which I had never before associated with the railway flora.

Now and again rare and choice wild flowers may be encountered on the railroad. When I was in Switzerland some seasons ago I noticed that the railway embankment between Territet and Montreux, on the shore of the Lake of Geneva, was covered with the attractive deep blue flowers of the grape hyacinth. Here at home a beautiful hybrid between the two wild species of *Linaria—L. repens*, Mill., and *L. vulgaris*, Mill.—makes a fine show on a steep embankment not many miles from Winchester. Nearer to the city, at the summit of a deep chalk cutting, some lusty plants of the purple salsify have blossomed the last two or three summers. On the same London and South Western line, but nearer Eastleigh Station, some plants of the rare and very beautiful *Epipactus palustris*, Sw., or marsh helleborine, have taken a fancy to the railway. Escaping from a marshy swamp that adjoins the line, a dozen or more plants have invaded the permanent way. There they were to be seen in August last year actually blooming between the iron rails. They were naturally somewhat stunted individuals, for the *E. palustris*, Sw., as its name indicates, is a frequenter of swampy places,

and the permanent way did not afford the sort of hospitality desired ; but there they were making the best of their unwonted surroundings, the choicest species in the strangest situation that I have yet met with among the flora of the railroad.

CHAPTER XVI

LENT LILY WOOD

ALTHOUGH the daffodil or Lent lily has been immortalised by Shakespeare as the flower of the English spring,

> "That comes before the swallow dares, and takes
> The winds of March with beauty,"

yet in most seasons it is seldom seen in full blossom before April. The second week in the month is perhaps the best time to visit Lent Lily Wood in order to see the golden daffodils in their complete glory. It is indeed a sight never to be forgotten. For thirty years and more I have been what old Gerard calls "a diligent and curious searcher after simples"—that is, an ardent botanist who has travelled far and wide in search of wild flowers—but in all my wanderings up and down the country I have never met with so magnificent a display of spring flowers as the Lent Lily Wood now presents. The daffodils are to be seen in myriads, thousands upon thousands, thickly scattered throughout the wood. In the month of May there will be sheets of hyacinths, which seem, as Tennyson said, as though "the heavens were upbreaking thro' the earth"; but though the bluebells will present "a paradise of blossom," yet in point of splendour they do not equal the display of daffodils in mid-April. At this season there is less

competition, too, with other flowers, and the trees and underwood still wear their winter dress. The elms, it is true, are in blossom, and catkins are quivering on the hazel boughs, but the branches are still bare of leaves. Outside, near the keeper's cottage, the mossy banks are starred with celandines, and here and there beneath the oak-trees a few anemones will be found, but the daffodils have almost complete possession of the wood. And there for a season in countless hosts they reign in tranquil splendour, every one perfect in its own loveliness. Verily Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

In former days the daffodil seems to have been much commoner than it is now. In the sixteenth century Gerard says that "it groweth almost everywhere through England," and, he adds, "the common yellow Daffodill, or Daffodowndilly, is so well knowne to all that it needeth no description." It is still well distributed throughout the country, and in Hampshire it occurs in many localities. I have met with it in various places, but nowhere in such vast profusion as in the Lent Lily Wood. There is a beautiful colony of it in a large copse close to Quarr Abbey, in the Isle of Wight, and it is curious to notice how partial the plant is to the neighbourhood of monastic ruins. No doubt the good brethren who were lovers of the beautiful delighted in its presence and encouraged the bulbs to spread near their sacred surroundings. It will be noticed that Gerard speaks of the plant as "Daffodill or Daffodowndilly," and this second name, though it may sound a vulgarism, dates back to very early times. We meet with it in Spenser and in Constable and other sixteenth-century writers. The origin of the name "daffodil"

is hidden in obscurity. Some assert that it is a corruption of Asphodel; others that it is simply the old Anglo-Saxon word "affodyle," which signifies "that which cometh early." Other authorities, including Dr Prior, would regard it as a corruption of saffron-lily; and that the plant is commonly associated with the lily tribe is clear from its popular name of Lent or Lenten Lily, which in the Isle of Wight is sometimes corrupted into Lantern Lily. But whatever be the origin of the word, whether in the form of "Daffodill or Daffodowndilly," it must certainly be reckoned among the ancient names of British plants.

There is little wonder that the daffodil has been a favourite flower with the poets. Alike in classical and in modern times its praises have been sung. Gower celebrates it, and Shakespeare has enshrined it in immortal verse. "The daffodillies," says Milton, "fill their cups with tears." Wordsworth's exquisite lyric is well known; but hardly less poetical is his sister's prose description of the spot, "beside the lake, beneath the trees," where the flowers flourished. "They grew," she wrote, "among the mossy stones; . . . some rested their heads on these stones as on a pillow, the rest tossed and reeled and danced, and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind they looked so gay and glancing." "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever," cries Keats in *Endymion*,

> "and such are daffodils,
> With the green world they live in."

And Shelley sings:

> "Narcissus, the fairest among them all,
> Who gaze on their eyes in the stream's recess,
> Till they die of their own dear loveliness."

It is not surprising that John Clare, the poor peasant-poet of Northamptonshire, dwells with affection on the "drooping daffodil," for was it not a "sweet omen of returning spring"? The poems of Matthew Arnold contain many choice allusions to wild flowers, especially to those growing in the neighbourhood of Oxford, and in his beautiful monody in commemoration of Arthur Hugh Clough he calls to mind "the wood which hides the daffodil."

We remember, too, the lovely lines of Herrick:

"Fair Daffodils, we weep to see
You haste away so soon;
As yet the early-rising sun
Has not attain'd his noon.
Stay, stay,
Until the hasting day
Has run
But to the even-song;
And having pray'd together, we
Will go with you along."

The language of the poets may perhaps sound somewhat high-flown and fanciful, and yet it seemed to me that it was hardly possible to exaggerate the calm and quiet beauty of Lent Lily Wood as I saw it in the fitful sunlight of a spring morning. The wood in itself is one of exceptional charm, with winding pathways ever opening out some new vista of delight. But it is never so attractive as when the daffodils are in flower. The sight is so striking that it is stamped, as it were, upon the memory. The experience of the poet of the English lakes must have been often repeated in the case of many a "wandering herbalist" who has had the good

fortune to behold a host of daffodils dancing and fluttering in the breeze :

"For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude,
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the Daffodils."

CHAPTER XVII

FRITILLARIES

IT is curious how some rare and attractive plants, confined, it may be, to comparatively a few places in Great Britain, are yet extraordinarily abundant in the places where they occur. The wild tulip is a very scarce species, but I know of one disused chalk-pit where it covers the entire surface of the ground. The beautiful *Scilla autumnalis*, L., or autumnal squill, only occurs in one locality in the county of Hampshire, but there it stars with its exquisite blossoms some acres of ground. The lovely summer snowflake is seldom met with, but on the banks of the Loddon, near Reading, it is abundant. So with the fritillary or snake's-head, one of the handsomest and most attractive plants in the British flora. It is now to be found in perhaps one locality only in Hampshire, but there, at the right season, it is to be seen in tens of thousands. The last week in April is the best time to see this gorgeous sight, but the plant lingers on in blossom for the space of nearly a month. I paid a visit to this favoured spot a few years ago, and well was I rewarded for a long journey. There is no secret about the locality, for during the season of flowering it is visited by vast numbers of people on foot, on bicycles, in carriages, in motor cars, who carry away with them bunches of the curiously marked and exquisitely beautiful blossoms.

Indeed, while the plant is in flower, a good woman presides over the floral festival and sells hundreds of bunches of blossoms, the profit of which is devoted to some local charity. A little hut, made of wattle and straw, and lined with some household stuff, is made for her beneath the shelter of a high hedge at the entrance to the meadows, and there, from early morn till dewy eve, she remains till the harvest is over. The spot, which is in the extreme north of the county, is situated on the estate which a grateful country granted to the Iron Duke after the battle of Waterloo. The famous avenue of elm-trees, nearly a mile long, perhaps the finest in the county, opens out on the highroad, and in the meadows which lie between the road and the river the colony of fritillaries will be found. The River Loddon here divides the counties of Hants and Berkshire, and on both sides of the stream the flowers are abundant. In his poem on *Windsor Forest* Pope speaks of "The Loddon slow, with verdant alders crown'd," and the epithet is true. The stream is a very sluggish one, but in most winters it overflows its banks, and the fritillary meadows are sometimes under water for weeks together. This condition of things exactly suits the species, which flourishes best in swampy ground, and at Strathfieldsaye it flourishes exceedingly. Scattered over two large meadows, of many acres in extent, on the Hampshire side of the Loddon, the flowers may be seen in marvellous profusion. In places you can hardly see the green grass for the flowers. There are literally wide sheets of purple and of white fritillaries. The flowers are mostly solitary, and except when in bud always drooping, while in shape they are like a tulip. The beauty of the colouring is only equalled by its

strange and unique character. The family name Fritillary is derived from the Latin word *fritillus*, a dice-box, which is the common accompaniment of a chequer-board, which the markings of the flower resemble; while its specific name, *meleagris*, also applied to a guinea-fowl, has reference to the same peculiarity. The plant is well described by old Gerard in his *Herbal*, and is worth quoting, alike for the quaintness of the language and for the accuracy of the delineation. "The Checquered Daffodill or Ginny-hen Floure," as he calls the fritillary, "hath small narrow grassie leaves, among which there riseth up a stalke three hands high, having at the top one or two floures, which consisteth of six small leaves chequered most strangely: wherein Nature, or rather the Creator of all things, hath kept a very wonderful order, surpassing (as in all other things) the curioustest painting that Art can set doune. One square is of a greenish-yellow colour, the other purple, keeping the same order as well on the backside of the floure as on the inside, although they are blackish in one square, and of a Violet colour in an other; insomuch that every leafe seemeth to be the feather of a Ginny hen, whereof it tooke his name."

It has been questioned whether the fritillary, or ginny-hen flower, is really an indigenous plant in Great Britain, and indeed it is ranked by Watson as a "denizen"—that is, as a species labouring under suspicion of having been introduced by human agency. It is certainly a curious fact that the early botanists pass over the plant in silence, for it is undoubtedly one of the most showy species in the British flora. There is no mention of it in Turner, or Johnson, or Ray. Gerard,

as we have seen, accurately describes it, but he knows it only as a garden flower. It is greatly esteemed, he says, " for the beautifying of our gardens," and he adds, " for the bosoms of the beautifull." The earliest notice of it as a wild plant seems to have been in the year 1737, when it is included in a list of Harefield plants. It is now abundant, as all Oxford men know, in the Christ Church meadows and near Iffley, which may be regarded as its classical locality on English soil, but the great Dillenius, who was Sherardian Professor of Botany from 1728 to the time of his death in 1747, never mentions it ; and the first record of it at Oxford is about the year 1775, when Dr John Lightfoot, a distinguished botanist, notes it as growing in Magdalen College meadows. The earliest record of its existence in Suffolk is in the year 1776, in Essex in 1815, and at Strathfieldsaye, where it now grows in such lavish abundance, in the year 1823.

It is also strange that there seems to be no recognised English name by which *Fritillaria meleagris*, L., is known. Gerard, as we have seen, calls it " the Checquered Daffodill or Ginny-hen Floure." When Dr Bromfield visited the Strathfieldsaye locality about the year 1850 he could find no one who knew its name ; some, he tells us, " called the plants snowdrops (the white variety), others daffodils, while the rest pronounced them to be cowslips ! " In answer to my inquiry the lady of the wattle hut informed me that " some people calls it Turk's-cap, some wild tulip, and some, who be fine scholars, fritillaries." In other places the plant is known as " snake's-head." This latter is an excellent term, for not only do the chequered markings on the petals resemble those of a snake, but in an

unexpanded state the blossom, which is then nearly erect, bears a striking resemblance to the shape and attitude of a snake's head.

On the other hand, in favour of the indigenous nature of *Fritillaria meleagris*, L., it must be remembered that its geographical distribution in Europe would lead us to expect its presence in Great Britain, while the appearance of the plant in such localities as Christ Church meadows and at Strathfieldsaye have every indication of true nativity. Moreover, it is not confined to one or two habitats only in the valley of the Thames and of its tributaries; the plant is now recorded in *The London Catalogue* for no less than seventeen counties.

As so often happens, the beauty of the plant has tended to its extinction. In many localities it has been entirely eradicated through the baneful habit of transplanting wild species into gardens. In former years it was to be found in Hampshire, near the town of Bishop's Waltham, where the children were accustomed to gather it for their May Day garlands, but it has now completely disappeared. In Essex, too, in a damp meadow just beyond the village of Steeple Bumpstead, it was once to be seen in considerable plenty, but not a plant, I believe, now remains.

In the Strathfieldsaye locality the white and the purple varieties seem to occur equally, and it is difficult to say which is the more beautiful. This variation in colour is characteristic of the species and is generally found wherever the plant grows in any abundance. It is so in the neighbourhood of Oxford, as we are reminded in the lines of Matthew

Arnold, in his beautiful commemoration of Arthur Hugh Clough :

> "I know what white, what purple fritillaries,
> The grassy harvest of the river-fields
> Above by Eynsham, down by Sandford, yields."

In both localities the white and the purple varieties are as plentiful now as when the poet wrote *Thyrsis*.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WOODS IN MAY

ATTRACTIVE as are the woods in winter, when the bare branches of the trees stand out clearly against the grey sky, attractive as they are in early spring, when signs of awakening life are on every hand and the ground is starred with primroses and anemones, they are perhaps to many persons more attractive still when the voice of the cuckoo is first heard in the land.

It is difficult to exaggerate the glory of a wood when the bluebells or wild hyacinths carpet the slopes beneath the beech-trees. Tennyson might well describe the scene as "the heavens uprising from the earth." And with the bluebells a number of other species will be found. The yellow archangel, with its large, handsome flowers, lends a variety of colour to the scene, and in the damp hollows there are masses of the wood forget-me-not. A few wild orchids will be seen here and there, the twayblade and the "long purples" certainly, and perhaps the beautiful butterfly-orchis, and not impossibly in the more open spaces of the wood the white helleborine or the rare and curious fly-orchis.

It is these choicer species that give to the woods an additional interest and delight. In many of our Hampshire copses the Solomon's-seal is not uncommon, though, strange to say, it is unknown in the Isle of Wight. The plant, which belongs to the lily tribe, is

one of the most elegant of British wild flowers, and gives grace and distinction to any wood where it may be found. It attracted the notice of the early botanists, who consistently speak of it under the name of Solomon's-seal. The plant, it appears, was regarded as a conspicuous example of "the doctrine of signatures," the idea, namely, that "God Almightie, who maketh grasse to growe upon the mountains and herbes for the use of men, hath given to plants particular sygnatures, whereby a man may read in legible characters the use of them." The legible character of the Solomon's-seal was to be found in the rootstock, which, if cut across, would be seen to resemble a *signum* or *seal*. Hence the plant was of "singular virtue in *sealing* up wounds," and taketh away, says an old herbalist, "in one night, or two at the most, any bruise, blacke or blew spots, gotten by falls, or women's wilfulnesse in stumbling upon their hasty husbands fists or such like."

It is curious how sometimes a choice plant will be found in a single wood and yet be entirely absent elsewhere in the neighbourhood. The beautiful snowflake, with its terminal cluster of pure white flowers tipped with green, is doubtless familiar to those Berkshire folk who dwell on the banks of the Loddon; but in the neighbouring county of Hampshire it is supposed to be unknown. There is, however, one lonely wood, in the southern part of the county, where the *Leucojum æstivum*, L., as the plant is called by botanists, may be seen in flower every May. It is not indeed generally distributed over the wood, but is confined to one particular corner, and well I remember my surprise when some seasons ago I happened to light upon it. To all appearances the locality was a natural one. The

ground was wet and swampy, just such a habitat as the snowflake delights in, and the plants were vigorous and healthy. There was no human habitation near, and several large arable fields separated the wood from the highway. A few weeks later I was lunching with the owner of the property, when, knowing his interest in the flora of the neighbourhood, I told him of my discovery. He seemed, I fancied, a trifle annoyed at the information. He knew, he said, of one place where the snowflake grew, but he thought he was the only living soul who was aware of it. Sending for the large tithe-map of the estate, he asked me to point out the exact spot where the plant grew. I did so. Our localities were identical. I promised that I would not divulge the secret. The old squire is dead now and lies in the family vault beneath the floor of the village church, and I wonder if anyone, save myself, knows the wood in Hampshire where the snowflake dwells. It is in full blossom now.

There are two interesting species, to be found in certain woods in May, which never fail to appeal to my botanical instincts. They are both very local plants, but withal abundant where they occur. One is the blue cowslip or *Pulmonaria angustifolia*, L., and the other the true oxlip of *Primula elatior*, Jacq. It is of the oxlip that I now wish to speak.

Only in comparatively modern times has the plant been recognised as a distinct species. Up to the middle of the last century it was confused, at least in England, with the well-known hybrid between the primrose and the cowslip, not infrequently met with in our woods and called " oxslip " by the village children. The true oxlip, *Primula elatior*, Jacq., is now known to be entirely

distinct, and so far as this country is concerned is confined to certain localities in East Anglia, of which Saffron Walden seems to be the headquarters.

I know of one wood or spinney in Essex, a favourite haunt of my early days, where the oxlip is the characteristic plant. So abundant is it in May that the spinney might not inappropriately be called Oxlip Spinney. Not but what other species are to be found there. The primrose, it is true, is absent, as is often the case in those places where the oxlip dwells, but the ordinary spring flowers are abundant. Sheets of bluebells may be seen, and the twayblade and the purple orchis and the delicate little wood-sorrel, and there, if I remember rightly, I found my first bird's-nest orchis. But the pride of the spinney is the oxlip. It is a wood, moreover, of literary associations. Turning the other day to my old copy of Quarles' *Emblems*, I noticed that one set of commendatory verses, placed at the beginning of the volume, were written by the eccentric poet, Edward Benlowes, and that he dated his strange Latin effusion from " Brent Hall," in the year 1634. Brent Hall was the paternal seat of the Benlowes, and the oxlip spinney is situated just beyond the old family mansion and formed part of the ancestral estate. It is interesting to associate the wood with Quarles and Benlowes. The two poets were intimate friends, and Quarles often stayed at Brent Hall. He dedicated the *Emblems* to his " much honoured and no less truly beloved friend, Edward Benlowes, Esq^re^," and according to tradition he wrote many of the verses at Brent Hall. It will, moreover, be remembered by lovers of old books that in one early edition of the *Emblems* there is a quaint illustration of the terrestrial globe, on which four place

names only are inscribed. The names are Hilgay, London, Roxwell and Finchfield. The Hilgay allusion I am unable to interpret, but in London the book was printed, at Roxwell the poet lived, and in the parish of Finchfield, or Finchingfield, Brent Hall is situated. The tradition, therefore, is probably right, and we may think of Francis Quarles, when staying at Brent Hall, as wandering in the adjacent wood and there composing some of his strange conceits. And if he visited the Hall in May he would not have failed to notice in the coppice, to which the nightingales return every spring, the fine yellow flowers of the oxlip.

CHAPTER XIX

CLIMBING PLANTS

IT is difficult to exaggerate the beauty of our English hedgerows. They are a characteristic feature of much of the most charming scenery, of a calm and sober character, in our home counties. And it seems to be a feature of comparatively modern introduction.

Macaulay tells us in a striking passage descriptive of the appearance of the country-side in the middle of the seventeenth century that few hedgerows were to be seen. It is clear, he says, from the books and maps of the period that many highways which now pass through an endless succession of orchards and meadows and cornfields then ran through nothing but moorland and swamp and warren. In the drawings of English landscape made in that age hardly a hedgerow, he declares, is to be seen, and numerous tracts, now rich in cultivation, appear as bare as Salisbury Plain.

A comparison of the country-side in the south or west of England with that of the fenland around Cambridge or in the Isle of Ely will reveal at once how much we owe to our hedgerows. Or, to take another illustration, during the period of agricultural depression which marked the closing decades of the last century, a number of hedgerows in East Essex were stubbed up as prejudicial to the growth of corn, and the appearance

of the landscape was grievously impaired. In rural England it will be allowed that the existence of hedgerows is a great addition to the interest and charm of the country-side.

How much of that charm is due to climbing plants is hardly perhaps realised. A dense growth of hedgerow is always attractive, both in itself and because of the number of birds which are attracted by its shelter and repose ; but the interest is enhanced a hundredfold by the various species of wild flowers which trail and clamber over the brushwood. To see a hedgerow at its best the dog-roses and honeysuckle should be in bloom and the wild hop hanging in careless festoons over the tangled bushes ; or perhaps later on in the season when the nuts are ripe and the berries are reddening and the white feathery plumes of the old-man's-beard lend grace and glory to the scene.

There are many species of climbers and they belong to various orders of British plants. Some of the older botanists were wont to class them all together as "herbes that clamber up," which "have need to be propped up for they stand not of themselves" ; but in truth the capacity for climbing is no indication of affinity. Various, too, are the contrivances whereby climbing plants manage to fulfil their destiny. Some like the hop and the honeysuckle climb by the simple method of twisting ; some as the wild *Clematis* are leaf-climbers ; others like the white bryony and some of the vetches produce tendrils ; while others again develop hooks and prickles like the brambles and the goose-grass, or are root-climbers as the ivy. It is curious, too, to notice how certain climbing plants differ in the habit of revolution. Some revolve in a course opposed

to that of the sun or to the hands of a watch ; others loyally follow the sun ; and a few individuals like the feeble woody nightshade or bittersweet twine indifferently in either direction.

The wild hop invariably follows the course of the sun. So does the honeysuckle, which seems to be the only English climber which actually twines round the trunks of trees. Often, as Gerard remarks, " it windeth it selfe so straight and hard about that it leaveth his print upon those things so wrapped." Hence its name of woodbine, common in old authors, which well describes this habit. There is perhaps no hedgerow creeper which appealed so strongly to our forefathers. Did not Shakespeare declare in the *Midsummer's Night's Dream,*

> " I know a bank whereon the wild thyme blows,
> Where oxlips, and the nodding violet grows ;
> Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine " ?

And in *The Compleat Angler,* it will be remembered, our honest fisherman more than once takes refuge from the heat of the day " in the cool shade of a sweet honeysuckle hedge."

Of the true tendril-bearing plants we have several examples in the British flora, the most conspicuous of which is *Bryonia dioica,* L., or the white bryony. The tendrils are highly elastic and enable the plant to retain its hold in the most stormy weather. Darwin tells us that on several occasions he went out on purpose during a gale to " watch a bryony growing in an exposed hedge, with its tendrils attached to the surrounding bushes ; and as the thick and thin branches were tossed to and fro by the wind the tendrils, had they not

been excessively elastic, would instantly have been torn off and the plant thrown prostrate. But as it was the bryony safely rode out the gale, and with a long range of cable ahead to serve as a spring as she surges to the storm." It is an elegant plant—the only representative among our wild species of the cucumber tribe—with its vine-like habit and large pale leaves and greenish-white flowers, succeeded by clusters of crimson berries, which are very conspicuous and ornamental in late summer. It is, moreover, an interesting species because of the part it played in mediæval superstition. It is still known as mandrake in the Isle of Wight and elsewhere, and was formerly largely used in herbalism. An old herbalist informs us " how idle drones, that have little or nothing to do but eat and drink, have bestowed some of their time in carving the roots of bryony, forming them to the shape of men and women, which falsifying practice hath confirmed the error amongst the simple and unlearned people, who have taken them upon their report to be the true mandrakes." The root of the bryony grows to a great size, and " the Queen's chiefe surgion Mr William Godorous, a very curious and learned gentleman," once showed Gerard " a root thereof, that waied half an hundredweight and of the bignes of a child of a yeare old."

Of evergreen climbers we have only two examples among our native species, " the ivy never sear," which cannot be regarded as a hedgerow plant, and the wild madder. The madder is a hook-climber and clambers over rocks and bushes by means of recurved prickles on the stem and leaves. It is mostly found in the neighbourhood of the sea and is common along the Undercliff in the Isle of Wight. I also remember

seeing it growing abundantly in a similar situation between Lyme Regis and Pinny, on the coast of Devonshire. The goose-grass or cleavers, a near relative of the madder, very common along our hedgerows, also possesses hooked bristles. The brambles, as is well known, are armed with formidable prickles, and so are some of the wild roses, which enable them to climb over the highest hedgerows, where they put forth in the June sunlight their exquisite flowers.

But of all our climbing plants which lend grace and beauty to the country-side the most conspicuous is the wild *Clematis* or old-man's-beard, which, when the roses are over, deck with the hoary plumes of its seed-vessels the autumn hedgerows. Gerard, with happy inspiration, called the plant "the Traveller's Joy," because "of its decking and adorning wayes and hedges where people travel." After the clusters of white flowers come, as he says, "great tufts of flat seeds, each seed having a fine white plume like a feather fastened to it, which maketh in the winter a goodly shew, covering the hedges white all over with his feather-like tops." The traveller's joy has a curious method of climbing. It is a leaf-climber, using its petioles or leaf-stalks as a means of attaching itself to the stems and branches of other plants. In winter the blades of the leaves drop off, leaving the clasping petioles attached to the branches, which then have the appearance of true tendrils. It is a local plant, entirely absent in some districts and very abundant in others. In the chalk districts of Hampshire it is very abundant, and the hedgerows never look more beautiful, except, of course, when the dog-roses are in bloom, than in late

harvest-time, when the crimson hips and haws are ripening and the berries of the white and the black bryonies are hanging in scarlet clusters, and the whole brushwood is festooned with the white plumes of the traveller's joy.

CHAPTER XX

WHITE VARIETIES OF BRITISH PLANTS

THERE is a strange fascination associated with the discovery of white blossoms of flowers usually coloured. Sometimes, as with white heather, an accession of good fortune is commonly supposed to attend it. But, apart from the superstitions of the vulgar, the interest among botanists and lovers of our native flora in finding a white specimen of a blue or purple flower is well known. It is specially noticeable in the writings of the old herbalists, who, after the manner of their age, are always on the look-out for freaks and anomalies. Not infrequently, indeed, they treat as distinct species the white varieties of such plants as the sweet-scented violet and the nettle-leaved bell-flowers. Thus John Gerard, speaking of the white "hather," says: "There is another kinde that differeth not from the precedent, saving that this plant bringeth forth floures as white as snow, wherein consisteth the difference: wherefore we may call it Dwarfe Heath with white floures," and he mentions that this species "groweth upon the downes neere unto Gravesend." Writing on *Prunella* or self-heal, a purple-flowered labiate, common in our pastures and on wayside wastes in summer-time, and formerly much used in village medicine, Gerard gives a separate woodcut of the white-flowering variety, and adds: "I have found some

plants of this kinde in Essex neere unto Heningham Castle."

A moment's reflection will remind us that these white specimens of flowers are usually of plants whose floral colouring is blue or red, and seldom or never yellow. Who, for instance, ever found a white variety of buttercup or wild daffodil or St John's wort? Among the thousands of celandines that star our hedge-banks in early spring a white specimen is unknown. Later on the kingcups will be golden in the swampy meadows, and the *Iris* or yellow flag will put forth its blossoms on the banks of the river, but you will search in vain for a white specimen. The coarse yellow *Compositæ*, the ragworts and hawkweeds, which add such brilliancy to our hedgerows in late summer and autumn, never indulge in such vagaries as to assume a white habit. And the reason is not far to seek, if we accept the theory of our masters. The earliest petals, it seems, were flattened stamens, and since stamens are mostly yellow, the flowers were yellow likewise. Then some of them became white; after that, in the course of ages, a few of them grew to be red or purple; and finally a comparatively small number acquired various shades of lilac, mauve, violet or blue. So wrote Grant Allen in his interesting book on the colours of flowers. But, as he points out, plants, like men, sometimes show a tendency to fall back to a lower stage of development. This tendency, when it affects only a few individuals, may be spoken of as reversion or relapse. Now primary yellow flowers, like the buttercups and potentillas, show little or no tendency in a state of nature to vary in colour, for the simple reason that they have never passed through any earlier stage to which they

can relapse. White flowers, again, seldom vary, though now and again there is a tendency to revert to the earlier stage of yellow. Thus the wild radish, which has normally a white or pale lilac flower, will sometimes be found on the seashore with yellow petals, and not long since there was sent me from the neighbourhood of Winchester a specimen of the wild privet with distinctly yellow flowers.

In some instances it would seem that the colour of a species has not yet had time to fix itself. A striking example is the beautiful little milkwort, so abundant on some of our chalk downs. White, pink and blue flowers seem almost equally common. Here pink may fairly be regarded as the normal hue, while the white is doubtless due to reversion and the blue to progressive modification. The same explanation is probably right with regard to the wild columbine. The old botanist, Robert Turner, records having found "both the white and the purple growing wilde in our meadows in Hampshire, in a place called Gassen mead in Holshot," and I have frequently found blue specimens near Petersfield. The wild larkspur is another illustration, and the flowers vary between pink and white and blue.

It is seldom, however, that we find any species of wild flower habitually producing this range of colour. Usually in a wild state the reversion is simply to white. I have already alluded to white heather, and indeed all the purple heaths show a like tendency. The same is true of the beautiful pink musk-mallow, not uncommon along our Hampshire hedgerows, and of the soapwort, a rare and handsome species. All the *Geraniums* occasionally produce white or very pale flowers, and with the common stork's-bill the tendency is quite

marked. White specimens of the purple knapweed are not infrequently met with, and also of spear-thistle and of the common centaury. The handsome red spur-valerian has contracted a like habit, and a botanist of the eighteenth century noticed some noble plants with white flowers on the venerable walls of Winchester Cathedral. Till within the last few years this variety maintained its position on the south transept; now, while the normal red blossoms are conspicuous, the white-flowering plants have disappeared. It used also to flourish on the old walls of Yarmouth Castle, in the Isle of Wight.

It is, however, strange as it may seem, with the more highly developed blue flowers that this reversion to white is mostly seen. A notable instance is the sweet-smelling violet, where in some districts, as in the neighbourhood of Plymouth and in the Isle of Wight, the white variety is the prevailing form. In springtime, when the woods are carpeted with the wild hyacinth or bluebell, it is nothing uncommon to find a few plants with white flowers. In turning over the sheets of my herbarium I noticed quite a large number of white specimens of blue-flowering species. Among them may be mentioned the hairbell, the nettle-leaved bell-flower, the clustered bell-flower, the wild scabious, the viper's bugloss and the autumnal gentian. The round-headed rampion (*Phyteuma orbicularia*, L.), a choice and striking species with deep blue flowers, sometimes adopts the same habit. It is rare in Hampshire, but it grows in several places on the downs and on Old Winchester Hill, above the Meon Valley, where a white specimen may occasionally be found.

It is still more curious that this habit of relapse

should be found among the British orchids, the most highly developed of our entomophilous plants. There is much in connection with this fascinating order that is obscure, including the strange colouring of some of the species. Why, for instance, should the twayblade, abundant in our Hampshire woods, and the frog-orchis, common on the downs about Winchester, have deliberately adopted, as their normal colouring, a green or yellowish-green? But, not to enter upon the wide subject of degeneration, the tendency of individual plants of several species to relapse in colour to white blossoms is well recognised among botanists. White specimens of the purple meadow-orchis and of the sweet-scented orchis are found every year. On the down of the Isle of Wight, where the very rare green-man orchis grows, I found many pure white specimens of the spotted orchis. The early purple orchis and the pyramidal orchis both show the same tendency. But more interesting is the case of the bee-orchis. In an old list of Hampshire plants, made in the eighteenth century, the compiler, who afterwards became Dean of Winchester, specially mentions a down near Petersfield where white specimens were to be found. A fine plate represents the strange variety, and a note is added to the effect that the plant is "a new one not found in any other work." More than a hundred years later it so happened that I became vicar of the parish in which the locality in question is situated, and one day towards the end of June I climbed with eager steps the steep ascent, wondering whether the white bee-orchis still maintained its old position. The down was indeed a rich one as regards its flora. The fragrant orchis—very fine specimens, some, too, with white flowers—was

abundant, and there were hundreds of plants of the scarce and delicate musk-orchis (*Herminium monarchis*, Br.), the flowers of which smell like sandal-wood. The bee-orchis, too, was plentiful, and before long I came across the object of my search. There was the variety *albida*, conspicuous with its pure white sepals among its more gaily coloured companions, and growing, not in isolation, but distributed in fair numbers over the slope. Indeed the strange and rare variety gave a distinct character to the down, already distinguished as the home of the white *Gymnadenia* and the fragrant musk-orchis. Every summer I visited the little colony of plants, and once or twice since I have left the district I have returned at the right season to see my old parishioners on the windswept downs.

CHAPTER XXI

WINTER FOLIAGE

IT is naturally in the winter-time that evergreens are most conspicuous. For though, as old Gerard says, they "groweth greene both summer and winter," yet during the summer months their dark, rich foliage is merged in the prevailing wealth of verdure. But as the season advances, and the autumnal gales sweep bare the branches of deciduous trees, then do our evergreen species show themselves in their full pride and glory. The beauty of a winter landscape owes a great deal to its yews and hollies and ivy and Scotch firs. But besides these familiar species the British flora can boast of nearly thirty kinds of indigenous evergreens. Nearly half of these, it is true, belong to the *Ericaceæ*, or heath-family, and, except the common heath, the cowberry and the cranberry, are comparatively rare or confined to a few localities. Still, the bearberry is not uncommon in Scotland, where also the marsh *Andromeda*, the trailing *Azalea* and perhaps the blue *Menziesia* may be found. Ireland, too, can claim the beautiful *Arbutus* or strawberry-tree, which is said to be abundant in the neighbourhood of the Lakes of Killarney, and St Dabeoc's heath, which flourishes in many bogs in Connemara and Mayo.

In addition, however, to these rare or local species, our woods and forests in England, and even our humble

hedgerows, can show many an example of evergreen plants to gladden the eyes in winter-time. Scattered throughout the Hampshire woods and coppices, at Selborne, at Droxford and elsewhere, the spurge-laurel, somewhat resembling a dwarf rhododendron with its crown of glossy leaves, is frequently met with. The wild privet, too, is abundant in many places and forms a good growth of underwood in sheltered situations. In hedgerows the privet bush is often conspicuous by reason of its clusters of shining berries, on which the bullfinch loves to feed. There are few more striking effects of colour in winter-time, when snow is on the ground, than a cock bullfinch, with its bright crimson breast, feeding on the jet-black berries of the evergreen privet. In some parts of England the wild madder, called "evergreen cliver" in the Isle of Wight, is very conspicuous, trailing with its dark green glossy leaves, arranged in whorls usually of four or five, over the bare brushwood. All along the undercliff it is abundant—"the most that ever I saw," wrote Dr William Turner in the year 1551, "is in the Isle of Wight," where it enlivens the monotony of the winter landscape by the exuberant profusion with which it clothes the broken ground and crumbling rocks of that attractive district. Another humble evergreen is the wild periwinkle, which may often be seen covering with a carpet of deepest verdure the slopes and hollows of copses and wild grounds. In similar situations will not infrequently be seen shrubs of the knee-holme or butcher's-broom, well described by an old herbalist as "a low woody plant, having divers small branches or rather stems, of the height of a foot, whereupon are set many leaves like unto those of the Myrtle-tree, but sharpe and pricking

at the point. The fruit groweth upon the middle rib of the leafe, greene at the first, and red as Corall when it is ripe, like those of Asparagus but bigger." On the cliffs near Moulin Huet Bay, in Guernsey, the knee-holme is remarkably abundant, and some years bears a prodigious crop of bright red berries, which make a brave show among the huge boulders of dark grey rock clothed with lichens of the most brilliant colouring.

But of all our native evergreens the holly, the Scotch fir, the yew and the ivy are the commonest and most conspicuous; and of these, from the standpoint of beauty, the foremost position must be allotted to the holly. Evelyn calls it an "incomparable tree" and waxes eloquent over his holly hedge at Say's Court. "Is there under heaven," he exclaims, "a more glorious and refreshing object of the kind than an impregnable hedge of about four hundred feet in length, nine feet high, and five feet in diameter, which I can show in my garden at any time of the year, glittering with its armed and varnished leaves, the taller standards at orderly distances, blushing with their natural coral? It mocks at the rudest assaults of weather, beasts, or hedge-beaters." But more beautiful than even "this rare hedge, the boast of Evelyn's villa," is the holly-tree growing in its native soil. Formerly this species was more abundant in a wild state than it is now, and many places in England are named after the "Holme, Holly, or Hulver tree." At Holmwood, in Surrey, beneath the slopes of Leith Hill, the holly is still plentiful, and presents a fine sight in winter-time, especially in seasons when berries are abundant. The same is true of the New Forest, where, as Gilpin says, "mixed with oak or

ash or other trees of the wood, it contributes to form the most beautiful scenes, blending itself with the trunks and skeletons of the winter, or with the varied greens of summer." From time immemorial the holly, with the ivy and mistletoe — another native evergreen — has been associated with Christmas, as we are reminded in the mediæval ballad :

> "Christmastide
> Comes in like a bride,
> With holly and ivy clad";

and many of us, with Lord Tennyson, have maintained the ancient traditions, when

> "Again at Christmas did we weave
> The holly round the Christmas hearth."

The yew-tree is not far behind the holly in the beauty of its winter garb and in its sacred associations. From the earliest times it has appealed to the imagination of man. But unlike the holly it has not allied itself to thoughts of gladness. The "dismal yew," as the poets call it, "with its thousand years of gloom," has far other memories. In mediæval times it was often carried in solemn procession on Palm Sunday, in which connection some ancient writers speak of it under the name of "Palm." It was associated, too, with death and burial, and with churchyards. Shakespeare alludes to some use made of it in this connection in *Twelfth Night* :

> "My shroud of white, stuck all with yew,
> Oh! prepare it."

On the other hand, most people will agree with Charles Waterton in his admiration of the yew-tree. Charming, he well says, is its appearance after the sun has passed

the autumnal equinox. The delicate crimson of its fruit, with the dark green leaves behind it, present as pleasing an effect as any to be met with in a winter's ramble. Moreover, the song-thrush and the mistletoe-thrush love to feed upon its berries, and the golden-crested wren to play among its branches. And in praising the yew-tree we must not forget its humble relative, the lonely juniper, which gives distinction to many a chalk down and barren hill-side. The dark, glaucous hue of its foliage can be recognised at some distance, and, like the yew, it also bears berries, "greene at the first, but afterward blacke, declining to blewness, of a good savor, and sweet in taste."

The wealth of our winter foliage is further increased by the extraordinary luxuriance of ivy, which "climeth everywhere," on trees, old buildings, and walls, and often covers wide stretches of ground. Belonging to that order of plants which, as an old writer says, "have need to be propped up, for they stand not of themselves," the ivy is seen in its greatest perfection when it has taken possession of some spreading pollard-tree. Then it is that, "sending forth a multitude of little boughes every way, whereby, as it were, with armes it creepeth and wandereth far about, and bearing small and mossie flowers, which in due course produce bundles of black berries," the birds of the air love to lodge in the branches of it. It is not the "owl" only that seeks the shelter of the "ivy-bush," or, in spite of the assertion in an ancient carol, that deigns to feed upon its berries. When the haws along the hedgerows have disappeared, and the berries of yew and privet, of mountain-ash and mistletoe have been consumed, then do thrushes and blackbirds and wood-pigeons resort to the ivy

bush for food. And as for a snug and sheltered retreat in winter-time, when the silent snow possesses the earth, there is no place more secure or more sought after than the deep recesses of an "ivy-mantled" tree.

CHAPTER XXII

EARLY SPRING AT VEVEY

FOR the first ten or twelve days after the thaw there was little evidence, in spite of the brilliant sunshine, of the awakening of spring. One striking plant, however, was in full blossom in the woods and on the hill-side. The hellebore (*Helleborus fœtidus*, L.), known also as bear's-foot and setterwort, a large, bushy plant with deeply divided leaves and great clusters of pale green flowers edged with purple, was scattered here and there over the slopes. It is a rare plant with us, at least in the south of England, but it still flourishes in Gilbert White's old locality on Selborne Hill, where it sometimes puts forth its blossoms as early as January. But here, in the uplands above Vevey, on the rocks of the mountain gorges, in the woods and copses, it is common enough. I first noticed it, to my delight, on the perpendicular rock above the Castle of Chillon, and afterwards found it to be the characteristic plant of the uplands in early spring.

On 22nd February I climbed the mountain which rises above Blonay, known as Les Pléiades, up which a rack and pinion railway now runs to the summit, but the line is not open during the winter months. It was a lovely spring morning. The sun was shining brightly, the air was still, the blue waters of the lake sparkled below, and not a cloud rested on the snow-capped Dent

du Midi. On the steep banks of loose debris which the winter's frost had flaked off the grey rocks bright-eyed lizards were darting about ; several tortoise-shell and brimstone butterflies were on the wing ; and the yellow coltsfoot was just coming into flower on the wayside. Passing a woodman busy in barking a fallen tree, I remarked on the beauty of the morning. "Oui, monsieur," he replied. "Le printemps s'annonce." The woodman was right. The top of the Pléiades was still covered with deep snow, but just below the snow-line several tiny gentians were opening their exquisite ultramarine petals to the sun. Descending the mountain, I found on a warm, sheltered bank the first blue *Scilla* (*S. italica*) of the season, and in the Blonay orchards a few white crocuses (*C. albiflorus*, Kit.) were showing under the apple-trees. Spring had indeed declared itself.

From this moment the evidences of spring became more pronounced every day. By the end of the first week in March wild flowers were plentiful. It was pleasant to come across familiar English species blossoming in abundance on the hill-sides. The common coltsfoot made a brave show in long belts of golden flowers beside the mountain paths. The banks were bright with Wordsworth's little celandine, with primroses, with blue and white violets. On the loose stone walls the blue veronica was plentiful, and the attractive little *Draba verna*, L., and the maidenhair spleenwort fern. In the vineyards, which clothe the hill-sides above the lake, the ground in places was covered with the common chickweed, the garden spurge and the purple dead-nettle. But pleasanter still was it to come across some of our choicer English species, in comparative abundance. I have already mentioned

Helleborus fœtidus, L., so conspicuous on the wooded uplands. A far rarer English plant, confined, indeed, to a single locality in the county of Dorset, is the beautiful vernal snowflake (*Leucojum vernum*, L.). In appearance it is like a large snowdrop, marked on the edges of the pure white petals with touches of green. I had noticed bunches of this delicate spring flower in the Vevey market and had learnt that it grew wild in the neighbourhood. On 29th February, in the romantic Gorge du Chauderon, which runs from Les Avants down to Montreux, I at length saw the plant in its native home. At one spot, in the deepest part of the gorge, where the cataract thunders below, and far above just a streak of blue sky appears, the lovely snowflake occupied the almost perpendicular face of the rock. It was a situation worthy of the species. Long festoons of ivy hung from the deep crevasses ; here and there in the wide, gaping fissures a sapling of birch or yew managed to maintain a hold ; the wall of rock was green with emerald moss or fronds of hart's-tongue fern, and there, in an almost inaccessible position, the colony of snowflakes flourished. The flowers were past their prime, but the sight was not one easily to be forgotten. The *Daphne Mezereum*, L., with fragrant pink flowers appearing before the leaves early in the spring, has long been a favourite shrub of mine. It is very rare as a wild plant in England, although it is not infrequently seen in cottage gardens. I searched for it in vain for many years, until at last I came across several fine plants in a Hampshire wood. Some flowering twigs of this handsome shrub I also noticed for sale in the Vevey market, and the peasant woman assured me that the plant was wild and grew in some damp woods

near Châtel St Denis. For several weeks there were bunches of the mezereum for sale in the market, and it was evidently not uncommon in the neighbourhood. I was fortunate in finding several plants in full flower in a wood on Mont-Pèlerin. One other choice English plant to be met with in abundance on the shores of Lake Léman is the dark blue grape-hyacinth (*Muscari racemosum*, Miller). It is exceedingly scarce in England, but about Vevey it is everywhere—on walls, in pastures, on railway embankments, even as a weed in vineyards. A grassy slope close to St Martin's Church was blue with it about the middle of March, and so was the railway embankment between Territet and Villeneuve.

But if some of the early Swiss wild flowers are familiar friends, others are strangers to our indigenous British flora. A botanical ramble among the orchards and vineyards that cover the mountain uplands above the shores of Lake Léman will quickly remind us that we are not in England. The solitary *scilla* in flower on the sheltered bank above Blonay on 22nd February was only the herald of a countless host which within a week or ten days was to cover the country-side. We are familiar with the lovely little plant in our English gardens as one of the first to gladden our eyes in the early days of spring. But here, on the slopes above Vevey, especially about St Légier and Blonay, it is abundant. It may be seen by the wayside, on the sloping banks, in the orchards under the fruit-trees, everywhere. It was in full blossom this spring during the first week in March, and it presented a truly lovely sight. Never shall I forget one steep bank not far from Château Blonay, which was covered with *scillas*

and primroses. The combination of blue and yellow on the soft, green, mossy slope was very attractive. It was curious how in the orchards the *scilla* loved to bloom under the shelter of the cherry-trees. In many places the ground was blue with them. This partiality they shared in common with the wild crocuses which in tens of thousands dotted the short turf. As the specific name (*C. albiflorus*, Kit.) indicates, the flowers were mostly white, although in some places blue specimens were almost equally common. The wild crocuses were as plentiful as daisies on an English lawn.

Even more beautiful than the *Scillas* and crocuses beneath the orchard trees were the wild *Hepaticas* in the woods. By the end of February the plant was in blossom in the Gorge du Chauderon, on the wooded slopes above the Castle of Chillon and in some of the copses at the mouth of the Rhone Valley. In our gardens at home it is one of our most familiar spring flowers, but it is difficult to exaggerate its beauty when seen in its native surroundings. I first met with it in a steep wood not far from Chillon, where it was flourishing in company with primroses. No other species, except the spurge laurel, was in flower ; the wood was given over to primroses and *Hepaticas*. A few of the *Hepatica* flowers were pink, and by much searching a white specimen might be found, but the prevailing colour was an exquisite sky-blue. Never have I seen a lovelier sight in early spring than that steep and rocky wood illuminated with myriads of pale primroses and blue *Hepaticas*. A few weeks later the *Narcissi* would be in flower at Les Avants, and later on the full glory of the Alpine flora burst forth in the Swiss valleys and pastures ; but the delicate beauty of the early wild

flowers at the first break of spring—the gentians, *Scillas*, snowflakes, grape-hyacinths and *Hepaticas*—is more than sufficient to justify the enthusiasm with which Rousseau speaks of the delight of botanising on the lovely shore of the Lake of Geneva.

CHAPTER XXIII

WHERE IZAAK WALTON DIED

THERE is a peculiar fascination about an old house in which a great man has lived or died. It is akin to the charm of a rare volume with an interesting biography. The London County Council has done well in placing tablets on certain houses associated with distinguished citizens. We like to be reminded of Dr Johnson in Fleet Street and of Thomas Carlyle at Chelsea. The custom has been followed in other places. It is not unusual, even in country villages, to see a tablet affixed to a dwelling-house commemorating some former occupier.

The same association gives an additional interest to many official residences. How full of biographical reminiscences is Lambeth Palace, or the Deanery of Westminster. How many pilgrimages have been made to George Herbert's home at Bemerton, to Keble's Vicarage at Hursley, to Charles Kingsley's rectory at Eversley. So with many prebendal residences which, in cathedral cities, often cluster together beneath the shelter of the old minster. It is probable that the greater number of the more famous figures in English Church history since the Reformation were, at some period of their career, canons of a cathedral. But, strange as it may seem, it is not often possible to connect a prebendary with any particular residence. It

is enough that such an individual, distinguished in his lifetime as a preacher or a divine, was once a member of the Cathedral body: the residence he occupied is forgotten.

I was struck with this anomaly when, ten years ago, I became a member of the Chapter of Winchester. Quitting my old rectory on the banks of the Meon, I took up my residence in the Cathedral Close. There are few more peaceful spots to be found anywhere. It occupies the precincts of St Swithun's Priory. It is protected on the north side by what Tennyson calls "the long low minster," and on the south and west by the lofty monastic walls. Its ancient gateway, its mediæval remains, its prebendal residences scattered about the enclosure, its fine trees and quiet lawns, give it a sense of calm tranquillity that cannot be gainsaid. It is a very haunt of ancient peace. The Close possesses, in addition to the Deanery and the Porter's Lodge, and the picturesque, timbered dwelling-house known as Cheney Court, ten houses for the use of prebendaries. Until the middle of the last century the number was twelve, but in 1840 the Capitular body was reduced from twelve to five prebendaries, when two of the smaller and less convenient houses were pulled down. These ten existing houses doubtless assumed their present form soon after the Restoration. Great havoc was wrought in the Close during the period of the Commonwealth, and it became necessary to rebuild several of the houses, while all of them needed much restoration. The actual date of this work may, in some cases, be seen on the houses themselves, and other indications point to their completion in late Jacobean times.

I had not long been settled in my beautiful residence,

with its panelled rooms, its wide, dark oak staircase, its fine plastered cornice-work of fruit and flowers enriched with heraldic shields, its enormous roof-beams, which formerly had sheltered the Pilgrims' Hall, before the thought of my predecessors began to occupy my mind. A large number of prebendaries, some two hundred and fifty, had lived in the Close since the dissolution of the monastery. All of them, it is true, were not famous men. But the names of some are enshrined in the *Dictionary of National Biography*; a few were known in the world of letters; others were men of character and distinction in their day and generation. I began to wonder in which of the houses my more celebrated predecessors had lived. Who had occupied the pleasant residence which had fallen to my lot? Whose coat-of-arms, in seventeenth-century glass, figured above the doorway leading into the garden? Several rectors of Droxford, my old living in the Meon Valley, had become prebendaries of the Cathedral—Nicholas Preston, and Dr Hawkins, and Archdeacon Fulham, and William Garnier—in which houses did they reside? So with that interesting group of Latitudinarian divines—Dr Alured Clarke, Dr Sykes, Dr Balguy and others—which residences did they respectively occupy? Or John Mulso, the lifelong and intimate friend of Gilbert White—it would be interesting to know in which house the prebendary was wont to receive the great naturalist of Selborne. Or Dr Warton, the celebrated Headmaster of Winchester College and the friend of Dr Johnson—which was his residence, in which he produced the famous editions of Pope and Dryden? Above all, which was the house occupied by Dr William Hawkins? For Dr Hawkins was the son-

in-law of Izaak Walton; and where Dr Hawkins lived, there during the last seven years of his long life Izaak Walton lived with him (whenever he was in residence at the Cathedral); there the old fisherman made his will; and there he died. Which, I say, was the house in which Izaak Walton lived and died? That he died in the Close of Winchester was, of course, known. That he died in the residence of Dr Hawkins was also known. But which was Dr Hawkins' residence?

To these and similar questions I could find no answer. No man knew. Not even the faintest tradition remained. All knowledge on the subject had passed away as a tale that is told. But I did not abandon my inquiries. The Chapter-books in the Cathedral library were diligently searched, but in vain. Other old books and documents yielded no better results. The houses themselves I carefully examined, hoping to find some trace or indication of their former occupants. In a few instances a coat-of-arms, emblazoned in glass, or carved in oak, told its own tale; and now and again some initials cut in stone or wood revealed a probable occupier. But very little could I discover. Indeed I had almost ceased to expect that it would ever be possible to associate particular residences with the prebendaries who had occupied them.

However, a short time ago, the unexpected happened. One afternoon the librarian of the Cathedral brought over to my residence a tall, parchment-bound ledger-book, which he had found among a lot of "rubbish" stowed away in an old oak settle in the south transept of the Cathedral. It had the words "Wainscott Book" written in faded ink on the cover, and it contained many entries in a difficult seventeenth-

century handwriting. I was laid up at the time and my good friend thought that possibly the old ledger-book might amuse me. He was not mistaken. The merest glance at its contents was sufficient to show that here was a mine of information with regard to the prebendal houses and their former occupants. A closer examination made the use and purposes of the book clear. It had been decided at the time of the Restoration that, while the houses in the Close should be rebuilt " at the general charge of the Church," yet that

" all manner of wainscott of the several houses of Mr Deane and the severall prebendaries shal be made and finished at their owne proper charges respectively, by the particular owner of every such house, they or their executors to be paid for the same by their successors—abating one fowerth parte of the charge thereof."

This was decided by the Dean and Chapter on 1st December 1662, in the presence of George Morley, Bishop of Winchester. The newly found Wainscot Book proved to be the account-book, kept by the Chapter clerk, consequent upon this arrangement. It gives (under the headings of the different houses) the sum of money expended by a prebendary on wainscot and other improvements and the sum " one fowerth parte being deducted, according to the custom of the church," to be duly paid by his successor, stating in most cases the names of the said prebendaries. It is, in short, the book of Fixtures, to be taken over by successive occupiers of prebendal houses. Unfortunately the record is strangely imperfect and incomplete,

and dates are sadly wanting, but such as it is, the Wainscot Book throws much interesting light upon what hitherto has been a very obscure subject, and enables us, in a large number of instances, to discover the names of prebendaries who occupied particular houses.

The book begins with the period immediately following the Restoration, although during the seventeenth century six only of the twelve houses are dealt with. During the eighteenth century the record, however, is fairly complete, and a good deal of information has been obtained. That the residences differed much in comfort and convenience is clear, for we find the Chapter petitioning Charles II. to permit them so far to alter the statutes of the Cathedral as to allow the prebendaries, in the order of their seniority, to change houses as vacancies occurred. The result of this new but most reasonable arrangement was that not infrequently there was a good deal of shifting of residences in the Close. The senior canons naturally moved into the better houses and the new-comer had to content himself with what he could get. Indeed several of the residences came to be regarded simply as resting-places, to be put up with for a while, until in the course of time a better dwelling could be obtained.

My first endeavour, in dealing with the Wainscot Book, was to discover, if possible, the residence of Dr Hawkins, and therefore the house in which Izaak Walton died. It would be thrilling indeed if I could discover this. Every little detail in the career of the old fisherman is treasured up by a large circle of enthusiastic admirers. Witness the late discussion in *The Times* with reference to his supposed fishing-creel. What would not be the excitement if the house in

which he died could be identified! Some years ago, in the pages of *Longman's Magazine*, I recorded the result of my researches with regard to Izaak Walton's connection with Droxford. I there showed that Dr Hawkins was rector of that parish as well as prebendary of Winchester, and that therefore the allusions to Droxford in Walton's will were fully accounted for; that he had lived in the old rectory, still standing on the banks of the Meon, with his daughter and son-in-law; and that several of those to whom he left memorial rings were parishioners of Droxford, among others, Mr John Darbyshire, the curate, and Mr Francis Morley, squire of the village, both of whom are buried in Droxford church. I mentioned, of course, that it was during one of Dr Hawkins' "residences" at the Cathedral that Izaak Walton died; but in which house in the Close the event took place I knew not and no man knew. Perhaps the Wainscot Book might reveal it. I had long associated in my mind, from several trivial indications, the second house on the right-hand side in Dome Alley as the probable residence of Dr Hawkins. Its position in the Close seemed to correspond with an allusion to Dr Hawkins' garden which I found in a contemporary document; and, moreover, the initials W. H., with the date 1683, cut in a stone on the north side of the house, might refer to our prebendary. To my great satisfaction the conjecture proved to be correct. The very first entry in the Wainscot Book with reference to this house was the payment by

"William Hawkins, Dr of Divinity, one of ye prebendaries of the Cathedral Church of Winchester, to Mrs Frances Preston, relict of Dr Nicholas Preston who

was predecessor to the seyd William Hawkins, for the wainscott in his dwelling-house, the sum of twenty-seven pounds twelve shillings fower pence halfpenny."

This was a discovery of more than passing interest. Dr Nicholas Preston had been Dr Hawkins' predecessor at Droxford, and he lies buried in Droxford Church; and now Dr Hawkins was to succeed to Dr Preston's residence at Winchester, as he had already succeeded to his rectory at Droxford. The Mrs Frances Preston to whom the wainscot money was paid lies in the retro-choir of the Cathedral. The date of the transaction, as confirmed by the Dean and Chapter, was, as the Wainscot Book shows, 28th November 1676. This was the very year in which William Hawkins married Ann, the only daughter of Izaak Walton. It is clear, therefore, that on his marriage Dr Hawkins took possession of the house in Dome Alley that had formerly belonged to Dr Preston; that there he brought home his bride; and also took his aged father-in-law to live with them. It is further clear that Dr Hawkins continued to reside in the same house, probably until his death in 1691, certainly till the year 1685, when, as the Wainscot Book shows, he panelled his "new parlour" and also "the Roome over it, as far as the wainscoting would go." At the time of his daughter's marriage Izaak Walton was in his eighty-fourth year, but he had still some seven years (1676-1683) to live, and we may think of him as spending this closing time

> "serene and bright,
> And calm as is a Lapland night,"

with his daughter and Dr Hawkins, partly in the house up Dome Alley, in Winchester Close, and partly in the

old rectory at Droxford. In both places he was happy in the society of congenial friends. At Winchester he was specially fortunate. There was then living in the Close, in a house to the east of the Deanery, now, unfortunately, pulled down, his relative, Thomas Ken, prebendary of the Cathedral, "the poor little black fellow," as Charles II. called him, the author of our Morning and Evening hymns, who afterwards became Bishop of Bath and Wells. There was good Bishop Morley, an old friend of forty years' standing, then engaged in building Wolvesey Palace, on the other side of the Close walls. There was Seth Ward, a prebendary of the Cathedral, living up Dome Alley, nearly opposite to the residence of Dr Hawkins. And there was Dr Abraham Markland, also Master of St Cross, who took possession of Mr Seth Ward's house in Dome Alley in 1681, and who was also Walton's near neighbour at Droxford, holding the adjoining parishes of Soberton and Meonstoke. It is pleasant to think of this company of good men and to be able to associate them with their respective residences in the Close.

In February, 1678, a son was born to William and Ann Hawkins in the Close at Winchester, and it must have been a happy occasion to Izaak Walton when, on the 24th of the month, his little grandson was baptized in the great Norman Font of Winchester Cathedral. Later on a daughter was born and christened Ann after her mother. We can imagine how the old fisherman of ninety years would delight in taking one of his grandchildren for a "gentle walk to the river," when, from the summer-house in Mr Ken's garden, he would point out "the great store of trouts" in "the gliding stream." On 9th August 1683 Izaak Walton began to make his

will, being, he says, " this present day in the ninetyeth yeare of my age, and in perfect memory for which praysed be God." The will was clearly made in the Close and not at Droxford, for he speaks of himself as " I, Izaak Walton, the elder, of Winchester." In very affectionate terms does the old man mention his " sonne in law," Dr Hawkins, " whom," he says, " I love as my owne sonn." In addition to substantial property, he leaves to him and to " my daughter his wife," a number of little mementos, including a ring each, with these words, " Love my memory. I.W. obiit——." To Dr Hawkins he also gives *Dr Donne's Sermons*, and to his daughter *Doctor Sibbs his Brused reed*, " and alsoe all my books at Winchester and Droxford and whatever in those two places are or I can call mine." With regard to his burial he writes : " I desire my buriall may be neare the place of my death and free from any ostentation or charge but privately." The will, with its " Codicell for rings," sixteen in number, was not completed until 24th October, when Dr Markland was fetched over from his residence on the other side of Dome Alley to witness his friend's signature. Having signed his will, Izaak Walton sealed the same with the gold signet-ring that Dr Donne had given him, in which was set " a bloodstone with the figure of the Crucified, not on the Cross, but on an anchor, as the emblem of hope." For some few weeks longer the old man lived, when the memorable frost of December, 1683, proved too much for his frail constitution, and he passed peacefully away in one of the chambers of his son-in-law's residence on the 15th of the month. Four days later, on 19th December, his body was carried from Dr Hawkins' residence, down Dome Alley, and across the

Close, and laid quietly to rest "without ostentation" in Prior Silkstede's Chapel, in the south transept of the Cathedral. A large black marble slab was afterwards placed over his remains, with an inscription believed to have been written by Thomas Ken; and quite recently the east window above his grave has been filled with stained glass in memory of the "honest fisherman," who passed the last years of his honoured life in the uppermost house on the right side of Dome Alley, in the Close of Winchester.

"The house next ye Dean's stable," as the Wainscot Book calls No. 3—*i.e.* the residence adjoining the mediæval guest-house or Pilgrims' Hall, and built partly within it—was allotted to Dr John Nicholas, Warden of College, known to all Wykehamists as the builder of "School." He was appointed prebendary by Bishop Morley in 1684, three months after the death of Izaak Walton; and having finished "School" in 1687, he at once set about putting his prebendal residence into order. From the many points of similarity between the decoration of "School" and that of No. 3, it would seem that Dr Nicholas employed the same architect, believed to be Sir Christopher Wren, or at anyrate the same workmen. The cornice-work at the top of the wide oaken staircase of No. 3, decorated with the Nicholas coat-of-arms, corresponds to the cornice-work of "School," and the fine oak panelling is of the same pattern. Our Wainscot Book gives particulars of this later work. It appears that Dr Nicholas spent the sum of £73, 19s.—a considerable sum in those days—on wainscot work, giving as much as 6s. 6d. a yard for the wide oak boards with which he panelled "the parlor and drawing-Rome." It was

completed in 1687, as the Wainscot Book shows, the same date appearing on the fine leaden guttering of the house. For twenty-four years Dr Nicholas enjoyed the comfort of his residence, dying in 1711, when he was buried in the Cathedral, not far from the grave of Izaak Walton. The house of Dr Nicholas, as the Wainscot Book reveals, was afterwards occupied by several distinguished prebendaries. Another College warden, Dr John Cobb, held it for a short time. He was followed by Mr Anthony Alsop, a classical scholar of high reputation at Oxford, who, when tutor of Christ Church, had published a selection of Æsop's fables in Latin verse, which Warton, in his *Essay on Pope*, speaks of as "exquisitely written." Indeed we are told that his skill in Latin composition was such that "he was not unjustly esteemed inferior only to his master Horace." He was chaplain to Bishop Trelawny, who appointed him to the rectory of Brightwell, in Berkshire, and to his prebend at Winchester. His career, however, had a tragical ending. We learn from *The Reading Post* of 22nd June 1726 that

"on the night of the 10th of June, about 11 o'clock, as Mr Alsop was walking beside a small brook in his garden in the Close, the ground gave way under his feet, which threw him into the brook, where he was found dead the next morning."

He was interred somewhere in the Cathedral, as the Register shows, on 14th June, but as regards the actual spot of his burial, "no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day."

Later on the residence was occupied by "a very

clever man," appointed by Bishop Hoadly, "without any manner of application," direct or indirect, on his behalf! Dr John Butler was Chaplain to the Bishop of Norwich and became a popular preacher in London. One sermon, preached before the Sons of the Clergy, was described by a contemporary as "a mighty clever sermon." In 1760 he became a prebendary of Winchester, and later on was made Archdeacon of Surrey. During the American War he issued a number of political pamphlets, strongly supporting the policy of Lord North. In 1777 he was appointed Bishop of Oxford, and during his occupancy of that See he assisted Dr Woide in transcribing the far-famed Alexandrine MS. of the Bible. He was afterwards translated to the bishopric of Hereford. Dr Butler did much to improve still further the residence by the Deans stables. He spent over £100 on wainscot, and "marble chimney pieces," and other improvements; and most generously, on becoming Bishop of Oxford, he refused to accept the "wainscot money" due to him, but made it over as "a benefaction for the use of the church." He was succeeded by another prebendary of the name of Butler, who signs himself "Will Butler," who eventually became Bishop of Exeter. At the beginning of the last century the house was occupied for some years by Prebendary Edmund Poulter, a county magistrate of considerable notoriety, who figures in the pages of Cobbett's *Rural Rides*. He was followed by Mr William Garnier, another rector of Droxford and brother of the Dean of that name.

In the middle of the eighteenth century a number of able men, members, most of them, of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and belonging to the Latitudinarian

party in the Church, became prebendaries of the Cathedral. Most of them owed their position to Bishop Hoadly, who is conspicuous among the bishops of Winchester for the high standard of his appointments to posts of dignity and importance. Among this interesting set of men Dr Alured Clarke, a fellow of Corpus, deserves honourable mention as the founder of the Winchester County Hospital, the first institution of its kind in this country outside London. In the year 1741 he became Dean of Exeter (while retaining his canonry at Winchester), when he founded a similar establishment in the cathedral city of the west. Our Wainscot Book reveals the prebendal residence of this excellent man, who had made a resolution never to enrich himself out of the emoluments of the Church. His house in the Close—it is strange and fitting to remember—was the one consecrated during the war by its use as a Red Cross hospital, but now again utilised as the Judges' Lodgings, a fact which, we do not doubt, will prove of interest to those learned administrators of the law who, from time to time, occupy the ancient residence. Dr Alured Clarke was succeeded in No. 4, as the house is now called, by Chancellor Hoadly, son of the bishop, who, like his predecessor, was a member of Corpus College, Cambridge, and was also conspicuous for his public generosity, a virtue in which our Latitudinarian prebedaries excelled. A contemporary of Chancellor Hoadly's on the Chapter was Dr Arthur Ashley Sykes, another member of Corpus, and also appointed by Bishop Hoadly. He was a voluminous writer and controversialist, the British Museum catalogue containing over eighty entries in his name. He defended Hoadly, vindicated Bentley, answered Waterland, and supported

Clarke in the Arian controversy. With Dr Clarke he was on terms of intimacy, and acted as his assistant preacher at St James', Westminster. His residence at Winchester, it is interesting to discover, was the pleasant house standing on rising ground near the west end of the Cathedral. Dr Sykes died of paralysis in London in 1756 and was buried in the Church of St James', Westminster, thus making way, so far as his Winchester residence was concerned, for Dr Edmund Pyle, who moved into it from one of the inferior houses in Dome Alley.

Dr Edmund Pyle was a prebendary of some distinction. He had been private chaplain to Bishop Hoadly, and was also Archdeacon of York, and Chaplain-in-Ordinary to George II. He was a Corpus man, and possessed in a remarkable degree the gift of keen and pregnant criticism, whether of men or of affairs, which finds expression in a volume of his correspondence, published a few years ago under the title of *Memoirs of a Royal Chaplain*. Dr Pyle was very pleased with his new residence " on the mount," as it was termed, sorry though he was to lose his " good friend Sykes, who besides his other valuable qualities was," he says, " an excellent member of our Cathedral." Dr Pyle considered his new residence to be " the very best house in Winchester Close " ; he spent over £200 on it, he tells us ; and when, some years later, he was offered by Bishop Hoadly the Mastership of St Cross—a very lucrative position in those days—he could not bring himself to give up his " pretty house and garden for a nasty dwelling in a dirty boggy village, a mile and half off any conversible person, in an old rats'-hall, that is worse than Magdalene College First Court, at Cambridge."

For twenty years Dr Pyle enjoyed the Cathedral stall, which, he says, is "called a very charming thing, and so it is," dividing his time between his beloved residence, his duties as Archdeacon in Yorkshire, and his attendance as Chaplain at Court. It was found at his death, as the Wainscot Book shows, that he had made over to the Chapter the many improvements to his residence that he had carried out, declining to receive for the same any "wainscot-money." He also left the bulk of his fortune, nearly £10,000, in charity—bequeathing it to Bishop Morley's College for the distressed widows of clergymen on the north side of the Cathedral. Another member of the same set, also appointed by Bishop Hoadly, was Dr Ayscough, "a Winchester man born and bred in the College there," who eventually became Dean of Bristol. He occupied the residence next to Dr Pyle's, which was pulled down in the last century. But the ablest man among the Winchester Latitudinarians was probably Dr Thomas Balguy, also Archdeacon of Winchester, who owed all his preferments, he tells us, to "the favour and friendship of good Bishop Hoadly." Pyle speaks of him as a very agreeable and "special clever man." He occupied the residence, as we learn from the Wainscot Book, with the steep gables and stone mullions, now known as No. 9, which is probably one of the most ancient houses in the Close. For many years he had been lecturer on moral philosophy at Cambridge, and was an author of some distinction. On the death of Warburton he was offered the See of Gloucester, but declined it on the ground of feeble health and failing eyesight. He lived, however, for many years afterwards, dying at length in his prebendal house, when he was buried in the Cathedral,

where a monument in the south aisle may be seen to his memory.

It is a matter of much interest that our Wainscot Book enables us to identify the residence of John Mulso, who was prebendary of the Cathedral from 1770 to 1791. For Mulso was the intimate and lifelong friend of Gilbert White of Selborne. The great naturalist must have often paid a visit to the Close and have stayed in the mediæval residence his friend occupied. Its antiquarian associations must surely have rejoiced his heart. For Mulso's residence, into which he moved after a few months' waiting in Dome Alley, and in which he continued to dwell until his death twenty years later, was the house with the vaulted chamber, on the west side of the Close, now known as No. 10. In addition to the vaulted chamber of the time of King Stephen the house possesses a beautifully panelled " parlour above staires," the windows of which contain some fine specimens of early heraldic glass. Among the coats-of-arms there represented are those of Dr White, who was prebendary from 1555 to 1574, thus carrying us back in thought to the years immediately following the Reformation. On the carved oak mantelpiece is the heraldic shield of Abraham Browne, who became prebendary in 1581, and who held the position for forty-five years. According to tradition this chamber was the resting-place of the body of Stephen Gardiner, the last Roman Catholic bishop of Winchester, on its arrival from Southwark in February, 1555-1556, before it was finally deposited in the Chantry prepared for it in the Cathedral. It is easy to imagine how these historical associations would have appealed to Gilbert White, who was almost as keen an antiquary

as he was a naturalist. In Mulso's correspondence with his friend there are several allusions to the classic *History of Selborne*, which appeared in 1788. Writing to Gilbert White from his residence in the Close, he says: "Your book was mentioned with Respect by our Chapter (a full one) and the volume ordered to be bought for the Library." Again: "Mr Lowth and Dr Sturgess (both able men) admire your book, particularly the *Natural History*. Among others Dr Warton is excessively pleased with it." The copy "ordered to be bought" is still in the Cathedral Library, a first edition of the immortal work. Another interesting association with John Mulso's residence is the fact that his sister, Mrs Hester Chapone, was accustomed, after the death of her husband, to spend much of her time in the Close at Winchester. In her earlier days she had contributed to the pages of Dr Johnson's *Rambler*, and was soon recognised as an accomplished member of the blue-stocking circle. Richardson delighted in her sprightly conversation, and she frequently visited the novelist at North-End. She was the author of a large number of essays, but her most noteworthy performance, written for the instruction of her niece, John Mulso's daughter, was an educational work, entitled *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, which passed through many editions. Gilbert White was on terms of close friendship with Mrs Chapone, and it is likely that they often met in John Mulso's residence beneath the shadow of the Cathedral.

Our last prebendary must be Dr Warton, the famous headmaster of Winchester College, "a man of greater celebrity, as regards his general reputation, than any other who has filled that station." He was appointed

prebendary of the Cathedral in 1788, not, it is interesting to notice, by the bishop of the diocese, but by William Pitt, the Prime Minister. Two years after his installation, on the death of Sir Peter Rivers Gay, Bart., he took possession of the first house on the right-hand side in Dome Alley, paying to Lady Rivers for fixtures and wainscot-money the sum of £117. In that house Dr Warton lived, when in residence at the Cathedral, until his death in 1800. His time was divided between the rectory of Wickham, on the banks of the River Meon, and his house in the Close of Winchester. Until the Wainscot Book was discovered no one knew which residence in the Close was associated with Dr Warton and his friends. For he had a large circle of distinguished friends, which included Edmund Burke and Sir Joshua Reynolds, and Mrs Elizabeth Montagu, and other celebrities. They were all getting on well in years when Dr Warton was appointed to his stall at Winchester, but it is not impossible that he may have received a few of them in his residence in Dome Alley. Certainly that residence must have witnessed some of his literary labours. During the last ten years of his life he was busily engaged on the works of Pope and of Dryden. His annotated edition of Pope's works, in nine volumes, appeared in 1797, when he at once began a similar edition of Dryden. He lived to publish two volumes, and had other two ready for the press, when death overtook him in his rectory at Wickham, on 23rd February 1800. By his own desire his remains were conveyed to Winchester and interred in the north aisle of the nave of the Cathedral, by the side of his first wife.

Such are some of the revelations contained in the

parchment-covered Wainscot Book, which the librarian ferreted out of the old oak chest in the Cathedral and brought over to my residence a short time ago. The interest which the book has given me is great. And it occurred to me that others, beside myself, when on a visit to Winchester, might desire perhaps to share the pleasure of gazing on the prebendal residences of such interesting personalities as Dr Hawkins and Dr Nicholas, as Mr Anthony Alsop and Prebendary Pyle, as " old Sykes " and Archdeacon Balguy, as John Mulso and Dr Warton. At any rate, many will be found to view with unaffected interest and delight the house in Dome Alley in which the grand old man, beloved alike in England and America, " the prince of fishermen " and " the prince of biographers," spent the last years of his long and honoured life, and in which, at length, doubtless in one of the panelled chambers, he breathed his last on that bitter December day, shortly before Christmas, in the year 1683.

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